ENCOUNTER

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Robert Penn Warren

Promises

To Gabriel (born, July 19th 1955)

1. *WHAT WAS THE PROMISE THAT SMILED FROM THE MAPLES AT EVENING?*

WHAT was the promise that smiled from the maples at evening?
Smiling dim from the shadow, recessed? What language of leaf-lip?
And heels of the fathers clicked on the concrete, returning,
Each aware of his old unspecified burden, at sun-dip.
In first darkness hydrangeas float in their spectral precinct.
Beneath pale hydrangea first firefly utters cold burning.
The sun is well down now, first star has now winked.

What was the promise when bullbats dizzied the sunset?
They skimmer and skitter in gold light at great height.
The guns of big boys on the common go *boom*, past regret.
Boys shout when hit bullbat spins down in that gold light.
"Too little to shoot"—but next year you'll be a big boy.
So shout now and pick up the bird—why, that's blood, it is wet.
Its eyes are still open, your heart in the throat swells like joy.

What was the promise when, after the last light had died,
Children gravely, down walks, in spring dark, under maples, drew
Trains of shoe-boxes, empty, with windows, with candles inside,
Going *chuck-chuck*, and blowing for crossings, lonely, *oo-oo*?
But on impulse you fled, and they called, called across the dark lawn,
Long calling your name, who now lay in the darkness to hide,
While the sad little trains glimmer on under maples, and on.

What was the promise when, after the dying was done,
All the long years before, like burnt paper, flared into black,
And the house shrunk to silence, the odour of flowers near gone?
Recollection of childhood was natural: cold gust at the back.
What door on the dark flings open, then suddenly bangs?
Yes, something was lost in between, but it's long, the way back.
You sleep, but in sleep hear a door that creaks where it hangs.

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Long since, in a cold and coagulate evening, I've stood
Where they slept, the long dead, and the farms and far woods fled away,
And a grey light prevailed and both landscape and heart were subdued.
Then sudden, the ground at my feet was like glass, and I say
What I saw, saw deep down, and the fleshly habiliments rent—
But a-gleam, in a phosphorous of glory, bones bathed, there they lay,
Side by side, Ruth and Robert: the illumination then spent.

Earth was earth, and in earth-dark no glow now, therefore I lifted
My gaze to that world which had once been the heart's familiar,
Swell of woods and far field-sweep, in twilight by stream-gleam now wefted,
Railroad yonder and coal-chute, town roofs under the first star.
Then her voice, long forgotten, calm in silence, said: "Child."
Then his, with the calm of a night field, or far star:
"We died only that every promise might be fulfilled."

2. *GOLD GLADE*

WANDERING, in autumn, the woods of boyhood,
Where cedar, black, thick, rode the ridge,
Heart aimless as rifle, boy-blankness of mood,
I came where ridge broke, and the great ledge,
Limestone, set toe high as tree-top by dark edge

Of a gorge, and water hid, grudging and grumbling,
And I saw, in mind's eye, foam white on
Wet stone, stone wet-black, white water tumbling,
And so went down, and with some fright on
Slick boulders, crossed over. Gorge-depth drew night on,

But high over high rock and leaf-lacing, sky
Showed bright yet, and declivity wooed
My foot by the quietening stream, and so I
Went on, in quiet, through the beech wood:
There, in gold light, where the glade gave, it stood.

The glade was geometric, circular, gold,
No brush or weed breaking that bright gold of leaf-fall.
In the centre it stood, absolute and bold
Beyond any heart-hurt, or eye's grief-fall.
Gold-massy in air, it stood in gold light-fall,

No breathing of air, no leaf now gold-falling,
No tooth-stitch of squirrel, or any far fox-bark,
No woodpecker coding, or late jay calling.
Silence: grey-shagged, the great shag-bark
Gave forth gold light. There could be no dark.

But of course dark came, and I can't recall
What county it was, for the life of me.
Montgomery, Todd, Christian—I know them all.
Was it even Kentucky or Tennessee?
Perhaps just an image that keeps haunting me.

No, no! In no mansion under earth,
Nor imagination's domain of bright air,
But solid in soil that gave it its birth,
It stands, wherever it is, but somewhere.
I shall set my foot, and go there.

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3. *DARK NIGHT OF*

FAR off, two fields away,
Where dark of the river-woods lay,
I saw him divulged into daylight,
And stand as to look left and right.
You guessed his quick look aside,
Like a creature that knows how to hide,
And doesn't debate pride.
Yes, the owner might come riding
With pistol in pocket, or striding
Along with a stout stick in hand,
To say: "Get the hell off my land!"
And the fellow would understand.

The owner would be justified
To clean him out, hoof-and-hide.
He might set your woods on fire,
Or at least mash down barbed wire.
That's all the excuse you require.

I was twelve, and my property sense
Was defective, though much improved since.
Anyway, that day was a scorcher,
So I didn't get up from the porch or
Even whistle the dogs from the shade
To provoke that flop-jawing parade
Of brute holler and whoop through the heat
To set a tooth in tramp-meat.
Didn't lay down my book, or even shout
Back into the house what was out,
How hedge-skulker and creature of night
And son of pellagra and spite
Now stood in our honest daylight.

Now stood, then slowly moved
One step. Stopped to see if he'd proved
That a man could survive half a minute
Outside of the woods and not in it.
Looked back once to black safety of shade,
Then was caught in that great suction made
By the world's bright vacancy.
Was drawn by the world's blank eye.
Moved under the light-dizzy sky.

Far off, he is pin-prick size,
A mote dark in your dazzle of eyes.
He moves without truth or dimension
Across that vast space men should shun.
Lost and faceless and far,
Under light's malevolent stare,
In a painful retardation,
He moves toward what destination,
And so passes over
The enormity of clover.
Is now gone. Has passed over.

Afternoon, now strand by gold strand,
Ravelled out, and over the land
Light levelled toward time set

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For me to get up and forget
Egypt's arrogant dead,
Or what Mucius Scævola did.
Yes, time to drop book, and rouse,
And up and leave the house,
And round up the cows.

The cows drift up the lane.
White elder blooms by the lane.
They move in a motion like sleep.
Their jaws make a motion like sleep.
They are far ahead up the lane.
My feet dream pale dust up the lane.
I linger, leaf by leaf.
Dust, pale, powders elder leaf.
And the evening-idle, pale sky
Drains your body light-thin, and dry.
Air moves sweet through pale husk under sky.

But suddenly, you are you,
No pale husk the air moves through.
My heart clenched hand-hard as I stood.
The adrenalin tingled my blood.
My lungs made a fish-gasp for air.
The cold prickle ran in my hair.

Beneath elder bloom, the eyes glare.

Couched under elder bloom,
In the honeysuckle he'd made room,
And the white strands regally wreathed
His old head, and the air he breathed
Was heavy with the languishment
Of that too sweet scent.
He was old, rough-grizzled, and spent.

Old and spent, but heaves up his head,
And our eyes thread the single thread
Of that human entrapment, until,
In a voice like a croak from an old well,
He says: "Caint you git on away?"
But I simply can't move away.
He says: "Caint you let a man lay?"

I stared down the dank depth where
From cold slime the croak rose to air.
I didn't know what I had heard,
Not a human voice. Then he stirred,
Jerked up, stumbled up in his lair,
Like an old mule snagged in barbed wire.
He jerked free, for a moment stood there.

I stood there a little alone
And stared down the lane where he'd gone,
Then turned to follow the cows
Up yonder toward the house,
There to enter and understand
My plate laid by a loving hand,

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And to sleep, but not understand
That somewhere on the dark land,
Unable to stop or stand,
On a track no man would have planned,
By age, rage, rejection unmanned,
A bundle of rags in one hand,
Old black felt hat in other hand,
At last he can understand,
And with his old head bare,
Now moves in the dark air.
His head moves in the dark air,
And gleams with the absolute and glacial purity of despair.
His head, unbared, moves with the unremitting glory of stars high in the night heaven there.
He moves in joy past contumely of stars or insolent indifference of dark air.
May we all enter into that awfulness of joy he has found there.

4. *COUNTRY BURYING: 1919*

A THOUSAND times you've seen that scene:
Oak grove, bare ground, the little white church there,
Bone-white in that light, and through dust-pale green
Of oak leaf, the steeple pokes up in the bright air.

For it is summer, and I once sat
At grove-edge beyond the disarray
Of cars in the shade-patch, this way and that.
They stood patient as mules now in the heat of the day.

Chevrolet, T-Model, a Hudson or two,
They are waiting like me, and the afternoon glares.
Waiting is all they have come to do.
What goes on inside is no concern of theirs,

Nor of mine, who have lost a boy's afternoon,
When summer's so short, oh, so short, just to bring
My mother to bury someone she'd scarce known.
"I respect her," she'd said, but was that enough of a thing?

Who was she? Who knows? I'd not thought to ask it.
They came in to town, in buggy or Ford,
Some butter to swap, clutch of eggs in a basket,
Gnarled hands in black mittens, old face yellow as a gourd.

It's no matter now who lies in the church,
Where heads bend in duty in sparse rows.
Green miles of tobacco, sun-dazzled, stretch
Away. Red clay, the road winds, goes on where it goes.

And we, too, now go, down the road, where it goes,
My mother and I, the hole now filled.
Light levels on fields now, dusk crouches in hedge-rows,
As we pass from what is, toward what will be, fulfilled,

And I passed toward voices and the foreign faces,
Knew dawn in strange rooms, and the heart gropes for centre,
But should I come back, and come back where that place is,
Oak grove, white church, in day-glare a-daze, I might enter.

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For what? But enter, and find what I'd guess:
The odour of varnish, hymnals stacked on a chair,
Light religiously dim by painted paper on window glass,
And the insistent buzz of a fly lost in shadow, somewhere.

Why doesn't that fly stop buzzing—stop buzzing up there!

5. *SUMMER STORM (CIRCA 1916) AND GOD'S GRACE*

TOWARD sun, the sun flared suddenly red.
The green of woods was doused to black.
The cattle bellowed by the hay-stack.
Redder than ever, red clay was red.
Up the lane the plowhands came pelting back.

Astride and no saddle, and they didn't care
If a razor-back mule at a break-tooth trot
Was not the best comfort a man ever got,
But came huddling on, with jangling gear,
And the hat that jounced off stayed off, like as not.

In that strange light all distance died.
You know the world's intensity.
Field-far, you read the aphid's eye,
The mole in his sod can no more hide
And weeps beneath the naked sky.

Past silence sound insinuates
Past ear into the inner brain,
The toad's asthmatic breath is pain,
The cut-worm's tooth grinds and grates,
The root, in earth, screams, screams again,

But no cloud yet. No wind, though you,
A half a county off, now spy
The crow that, labouring zenith-high,
Is suddenly, with wings askew,
Snatched, and tumbled down the sky.

And so you waited. You couldn't talk.
The creek-side willows shuddered grey.
The oak leaf turned the other way,
Grey as fish-belly. Then with a squawk,
The hen-house heaved, and flew away,

And darkness rode in on the wind.
The pitchfork lightning tossed the trees,
And God got down on hands and knees
To peer and cackle and commend
His own sadistic idiocies.

Next morning you stood where the bridge washed out.
A drowned cow bobbled down the creek.
Raw-eyed, men watched. They did not speak.
Till one shrugged, said he might make out.
Then turned, took the woods-path up the creek.

Oh, send them summer, one summer just right,
With rain well spaced, no wind or hail.
Let cut-worm tooth falter, locust-jaw fail,
And if a man wake at roof-roar at night,
Let that roar be the roar of God's awful grace, and not His flail.

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6. *DARK WOODS*

(a)

TONIGHT the woods are darkened.
You have, long back, forgot
What impulse or perturbation
Had made you rise. You went out

Of the house, where faces and light were
To walk, and the night was black.
The dog whined. He tried to follow.
You picked up some rocks. Rocked him back.

One yelp the brute gave from back there.
Good. So now you were free
To enter the field and dark there
Under your heart's necessity.

Under sparse star-gleam, a glimmer
Of pale dust provoked your feet
To pursue the ectoplasmic bisection
Of the dark field-heave, and to meet,

Yonder where woods massed their darkness,
A darkness more absolute.
All right: and in shadow the pale dust,
How soundless, accepted the foot.

Foot trapped in that silken compulsion
Of dust, and dust-softness, and the pale
Path's glimmer in field-darkness,
You moved. Did nerve fail?

Could you stop? No, all's re-enactment.
Trapped in that *déjà-vu*,
Déjà-fait, *déjà-fait*, you hear whispers,
In the dark, say, "Ah." Say: "You, too!"

Was there a field dull of folk there,
Behind you? Threading like mist?
All those who, dark-hungry, had once flung forth
From the house, and now persist

In the field-dark to spy on and count you—
Those who now rejoice not, nor grieve,
But yet leer in their spooky connivance,
Waiting to pluck sleeve?

You wheel now to face them, but nothing
Is there. Only you. And in starlight,
Beyond the old field and pale cow-track,
The woods wait. They wait. All right.

(b)

All right: and with that wry acceptance you follow the cow-track.
Yes, it's dark in the woods, as black as a peddler's pocket.
Cobweb tangles, briar snatches. A sensible man would go back.
A bough finds your face, and one eye grieves in the socket.

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Midnight compounds with the peeper. Now whippoorwills speak,
Far off. Then silence. What's that? And something blots star,
By your head velvet air-*whoosh*, a curdle and shudder of wing-creak.
It is only an owl. You go on. You can guess where you are.

For here is the gum-swamp, the slough where you once trapped the weasel.
Here the dead cow was dumped, and by buzzards duly divested.
All taint of mortality's long since wiped clean as a whistle.
Now love-vine threads eye-hole, God's peace is by violet attested.

The bones are long lost. In green grass the skull waits, has waited:
A cathedral for ants, and at noon, under white dome, great transept,
They pass in green gloom, where the sunlight's by leaf mitigated,
For leaf of the love-vine shuts eye-hole, as though the eye slept.

But now it's not noon, it is night, and ant-dark in that cow-skull.
And man-dark in the woods. But go on, that's how men survive.
Went on in the dark, heart tight now as nut in the hull.
Came back in the dark, and home, and throve as men thrive.

But not before you had seen it, sudden at path-turn,
White-floating in darkness, the dogwood, white bloom in dark air.
Like ice-break, broke joy; then you felt the strange wrath burn
To strike it, and strike, had a stick been handy in the dark there.

But one wasn't handy, so there on the path now, breath scant,
You stood, and you stood there, and oh, could the poor heart's absurd
Cry for wisdom, for wisdom, ever be answered? Triumphant,
All night, the tree glimmered in darkness, and uttered no word.

(c)

Tonight the woods are darkened.
  You have forgotten what pain
Had once drawn you forth:
  To remember it might yet be some pain.
  But to forget may, too, be pain.

The hazel leaf falls in autumn.
  It slants athwart the gold air.
Boys come, prompt at nut-fall,
  To shout and kick up the gold leaves there.
  Shouts echo in high boughs not yet bare.

The hazel leaf falls in autumn.
  Boys go, and no voices intrude
Now at dusk-hour. The foot
  Of only the squirrel stirs leaf of this solitude.
  Otherwise, only shadow may now intrude.

The little green snake by the path-side,
  In May, lifts its jewelled head.
It stares, waves the tongue-wisp.
  What it hears on the path is not now your tread.
  But it still stares with lifted head.

Yes, your tread's now fainter and farther.
  Years muffle a tread, like grass.
Who passed, struck; now goes on.
  The snake waits, head crushed, to be observed by the next to pass.
  He will observe it, and then pass.

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Tonight the woods are darkened.
  What other man goes there
Now stares, silent, breath scant,
  Waiting for the white petal to be released in dark air.
  Do not forget you were once there.

7. *FOUNDING FATHERS, 19th CENTURY STYLE, SOUTH-EAST U.S.A.*

THEY were human, they suffered, wore long black coat and gold watch chain.
They stare from daguerrotype with severe reprehension,
Or from genuine oil, and you'd never guess any pain
In those merciless eyes that remark our own time's sad declension.

Some composed declarations, remembering Jefferson's language.
Knew pose of the patriot, left hand in the crook of the spine or
Finger tip to the table, while the right invokes the Lord's just rage.
There was always a grandpa, or cousin, who had been, of course, a real Signer.

Some were given to study, read Greek in the forest, and these
Longed for an epic to do their own deeds right honour:
Were Nestor by pig-pen, in some tavern brawl played Achilles.
In the ring of Sam Houston they found, when he died, one word engraved: *honour*.

Their children were broadcast, like millet seed flung in a wind-flare.
Wives died, and were dropped like old shirts in some corner of country.
Said "Mister," in bed, the child-bride; hadn't known what to find there;
Wept for shame all next morning; took pleasure in silk; wore the keys to the pantry.

"Will die in these ditches if need be," wrote Bowie, at Alamo.
And did, he whose left foot, soft-catting, came forward, and breath hissed:
Head back, grey eyes narrow, thumb flat along knife blade, blade low.
"Great gentleman," said Henry Clay, "and a patriot." Portrait by Benjamin West.

Or take those, the nameless, of whom no portraits remain,
No locket or seal-ring, though somewhere, broken and rusted,
In attic or earth, the long Decherd, stock rotten, has lain;
Or the mould-yellow Bible, God's Word in which they had also trusted.

Some wrestled the angel, and took a fall by the corn-crib.
Fought the brute, stomp-and-gouge, but knew they were doomed in that glory.
All night, in sweat, groaned; fell at last with spit red and a cracked rib.
How sweet were the tears! Thus gentled, they roved the dark land with their story.

Some prospered, had black men and lands, and silver on table,
But remembered the owl-call, the smell of burnt bear-fat on dusk air.
Loved family and friends, and stood it as long as able,
"But money and women, too much is ruination, am Arkansas-bound." So went there.

One of mine was a land-shark, or so the book, with scant praise,
Denominates him, "a man large and shapeless,
Like a sack of potatoes set on a saddle," and says,
"Little learning, but shrewd, not well trusted." So rides out of history, neck fat and napeless.

One saw Shiloh and such, got cranky, would fiddle all night.
The boys pestered for Texas. "God damn it, there's nothing, God damn it,
In Texas," but took wagons and went, and to prove he was right
Stayed a year and a day, "hell, nothing in Texas," he's proved it, came back to black vomit,

And died, and they died, and are dead, and their voices
Come thin, like last cricket in frost-dark, in grass lost,
With nothing to tell us for our complexity of choices,
But beg us only one word to justify their own old life-cost,

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So let us bend ear to them in this hour of lateness,
And what they are trying to say, try to understand,
And try to forgive them their defects, even their greatness,
For we are their children in the light of humanness and under the shadow of God's closing hand.

8. *INFANT BOY AT MIDCENTURY*

(a)

WHEN the century dragged, like a great wheel struck at dead centre;
When the wind that had hurled us our half-century sagged now,
And only velliety of air somewhat snidely nagged now,
With no certain commitment to compass, or quarter: you chose to enter.

You enter an age when the neurotic clock-tick
Of midnight competes with the heart's pulsed assurance of power.
You have entered our world at scarcely its finest hour,
And you smile now life's gold Apollonian smile at a sick dialectic.

You enter at the hour when the dog returns to his vomit,
And fear's moonflower spreads, white as girl-thigh, in dusk of compromise;
When posing for pictures, arms linked, the same smile in their eyes,
Good and Evil, to iron out all differences, stage their meeting at summit.

You come in the year when promises are broken,
And petal fears late, as fruit the early, frost-fall;
When the young expect little, and the old endure total recall,
But discover no logic to justify what they had taken, or forsaken.

But to take and forsake you're now here, and heart the will compress
Like stone when we see, with first step, that rosy heel learn
Its awful and apocalyptic power to spurn
Us, and our works and days, and onward, prevailing, pass

To print, in high pride of undisillusioned manhood,
Sand of new century, where you, in your fullness, will stand,
And with calm eye and uncurled lip, command
That dawning perspective and possibility of human good.

(b)

There will, indeed, be modification of landscape,
And in margin of natural disaster, substantial reduction.
There will be refinement of principle, and purified action,
And expansion, we trust, of the human heart-hope, and hand-scope.

But is it a meanness of spirit and indulgence of spite
To suggest that your fair time, and friends, will mirror own
Somewhat, and ourselves, for flesh will yet grieve on the bone,
And the heart grope for justification in the midst of its mortal plight?

Some will take up religion, some discover the virtue of money.
Some will find liberal causes the mask for psychic disturbance.
Some will expiate ego with excessive kindness to servants,
And some make a cult of honour, having often quite little, if any.

Some hating all humans, will cultivate love for cats,
As some, from self-hate, will give children a morbid devotion.

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Some will glorify friendship, but watch for the slightest motion
Of eyelid, or lip-twitch, and the expected betrayal it indicates.

Success for the great will be heart-bread, and soul's only ease.
For some it will stink, like mackerel shining in moonlight.
At the mere thought of failure some will wet their sheets in the night.
Some will wear it as proud as Kiwanis, or manhood's first social disease.

Yes, the new age will need the old lies, as our own did;
For death is ten thousand nights,—if it's only the process
Of accommodating flesh to an idea, there's still natural distress
In learning to face Truth's glare-glory, from which our eyes are long hid.

(c)

You will read the official histories—true, no doubt.
Barring total disaster, the record will speak from the shelf.
And if there's disaster, disaster will speak for itself.
So all of our lies will be truth, and the truth vindictively out.

Remember our defects, we give them to you gratis.
But remember that ours is not the worst of times.
We stand convicted of follies rather than crimes,
Who throw out baby with bath, drop the meat in the fire where the fat is.

And in even such stew and stink as Tacitus
Wrote of, his generals, gourmets, pimps, poltroons,
He found persons of private virtue, the old-fashioned stout ones
Who would bow the head to no blast; and we know that they are yet with us.

He puzzled how virtue finds perch past confusion and wrath;
How even Praetorian brutes, without love or hate,
Proud in their craftsman's pride only, held a last gate,
And died, and each back unmarred as though at the barracks bath.

And remember that many among us now wish you well;
And once, on a strange shore, an old man, toothless and through,
Groped hand from the lattice of personal disaster, to touch you.
He sat on the sand for an hour; said, *ciao*, *bello*, as evening fell.

And think, as you move past our age that grudges and grieves,
How eyes, purged of envy, will follow your sunlit chance.
Eyes will brighten to follow your brightness and dwindle of distance.
From privacy of fate eyes will follow, as though from the shadow of leaves.

9. *LULLABY*

SLEEP, my son, and smile in sleep.
You will dream the world anew.
Watching you now sleep,
I feel the world's depleted force renew,
Feel the nerve and expand and knit,
Feel a rustle in the blood,
Feel wink of warmth and stir of spirit,

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As though season woke in the winter underwood.
Your vernal work is now begun.
Sleep, my son.
Sleep, son.

You will see the nestling fall.
Blood flecks grass of the rabbit form.
You will, of course, see all
The world's brute ox-heel wrong, and shrewd hand-harm.
Throats are soft to invite the blade.
Truth invites the journalist's lie.
Love bestowed mourns trust betrayed,
But the heart most mourns its own infidelity.
The greater, then, your obligation.
Dream perfection.
Dream, son.

When the diver leaves the board
To hang at gleam-height in his sky,
Trajectory is toward
An image hung perfect as light in the mind's wide eye.
So your dream will later serve you.
So now, dreaming, you serve me,
And give the heart new patent to
Enfranchise the human possibility.
Grace undreamed is grace forgone.
Dream grace, son.
Sleep on.

Dream that sleep is a sunlit meadow
Drowsy with a dream of bees
Threading sun, and shadow,
Where you lie lulled by their sunlit industries.
Let the murmurous bees of sleep
Tread down honey in the honeycomb.
Heart-deep now, your dream will keep
Sweet in that deep comb for time to come.
Dream the sweetness coming on.
Dream sweet, son.
Sleep on.

What if angry vectors veer
Round your sleeping head, and form.
There's never need to fear
Violence of the poor world's abstract storm.
For you now dream Reality.
Matter groans to touch your hand.
Matter now lifts like the sea
Toward that cold moon that is your dream's command.
Dream the power coming on.
Dream strong, son.
Sleep on.

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Colin Welch

The Indian Mutiny

May, 1857

TO THE Europeans of Meerut, cut off from the seething life around them, May 10th, 1857, seemed quite an ordinary Sunday: odd only was the inexplicable absence of many servants. In the evening Mr. Rotton, the chaplain, was about to start with his wife and children for church. The Indian nurse implored her mistress to remain at home: there was danger, she said —a fight with the sepoys. Mr. Rotton scoffed at her fears, but on the drive to church he saw and heard enough to make him leave his family at a safe place *en route*. He heard the rattle of musketry, the shrill blare of bugles calling the assembly; he saw armed men hurrying to and fro, the panic-stricken looks of the unarmed, pillars of smoke rising against a fast-darkening sky: the sepoys had revolted. The Indian Mutiny had begun.

Within a few hours, the mutineers had thrown open the jail and released eighty-five of their comrades imprisoned for disobedience the day before. They had slaughtered every white man, woman, and child they could lay hands on, fired the European bungalows and stolen or destroyed the contents. In the middle of the night they made off for Delhi, the ancient Mogul capital, where, with the tottering King as its nominal, bewildered, and unwilling leader, their revolt assumed a national and political character.

This sudden eruption set a pattern which was to be reproduced in the next few months over most of northern India. Revolting regiments, sacked treasuries, arson and massacre, then the flight for Delhi: had all happpened simultaneously we must have been lost. As it was, British confidence and sense of security in India was gone for ever. We never quite recovered our nerve. Remembering warnings and precautions neglected before 1857, we felt we could neglect nothing again. Gone was the old careless confidence that what Indians thought and did was of no importance. Among those who did not love India and her people, indifference or contempt were replaced by a great fear. The massacre—or what you will—of Amritsar, and the nervous tension, reasonable or otherwise, which led to that disaster, were consequences of the Indian Mutiny. So, too, in its way, is Indian independence. From the Mutiny sprang alike the belief that we could not rule India without extraordinary vigilance and—when necessary—violence, and the suspicion that we could not forever rule India at all.

What led to this disaster? "It is quite evident," wrote Sir Henry Maine, "that the greatest fact in Anglo-Indian history, the mutiny of the Sepoy army, is as much a mystery to the average man of the West as are certain colours to the colour blind; and even historians are compelled to supply

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wholly or partially fictitious explanations of the events of 1857 to a public which cannot be brought to believe that such a vast popular uprising was caused by a prejudice about a greased cartridge." Maine was no fool, and he knew India. There is much sense in what he says. Certainly it is no use pretending that the East, to us, is not mysterious: it is. And apart from the cartridge there are many things about the Mutiny which are strange and unaccountable: how it spread, for instance, the lightning movement of rumour, the ominous *chapatis* which passed from village to village, which obviously meant something—but what? Even those who passed them seem to have had no clear idea. Nevertheless, to point to the cartridges as the spark which caused the explosion is not to explain all that had assembled the combustible matter which it lit. That we were powerless to check the spread of a rumour—quite false in its essentials—argues that the Indian sepoy had *already* lost contact with his superiors and confidence in their good faith. That the resulting conflagration spread far beyond the Bengal army and assumed—as it most certainly did—the character of a general revolt is something that no fuss about cartridges can explain.

THE TRUTH is that we had ceased to fit naturally into India. We had ceased to participate in India: we only worked there. Nor did we any longer work with Indians at their level: we worked above their heads, imposing our decisions upon them.

The Englishman of the 18th and early 19th centuries had one signal advantage over his successors: he was not *shocked* by India.* He was not shocked by dirt and corruption. He had little reason to be: there was plenty of both at home. He did not despise the Indians for their technical backwardness: little more advanced himself, how could he? Confronted, indeed, by the wealth, majesty, and antiquity of Indian civilisation he sometimes had the grace to confess himself a *parvenu*.

The 19th century brought with it an Englishman of a new type, a Steam Intellect Society Englishman—arrogant, radical, contemptuous, and self-righteous, a leveller and a prig, convinced of his mission to direct and improve, untroubled by doubts, indifferent to —or even ignorant of—what Indians thought, felt, or said.* To him Indian religious beliefs were mere superstition, Indian social organisation a laughable charade. All that stood in his path was to be swept, like so much lumber, ruthlessly aside. The thought that what he swept away might one day have protected or been of service to him in troubled times never crossed his mind: he thought himself invulnerable. Nor did he doubt for a moment that things were better done well by himself than done ill, or at least differently, by Indians. It was an axiom of his that the Indian was good for nothing: unfit to command troops, unfit to share in the government of his own country, unfit even to own land and to exercise the responsibilities that go with it.

As early as 1817 Sir Thomas Munro had written: "They [the advantages of British rule] are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable. . . . The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be . . . to debase a whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the government of the country as in British India." And a year later: "Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence, and often with great cruelty, but none with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatised the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to be not only ungenerous but impolitic to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion."

Sir Thomas's protests were barren. During

* I think it was H. N. Brailsford who once suggested that our Victorian administrators ought to have spent a year in Italy to prepare themselves for the southern strangeness of India.

* The contrast between this Englishman and his predecessor is vividly illustrated by comparing the writings on India of James Mill and Macaulay on the one hand and of, say, Sir William Jones on the other.

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the succeeding four decades the tendencies he deplored were vastly accelerated, pushed on by such evangelists of efficiency as Lord Dalhousie and John Lawrence—great men, both, who did much *for* India, and nothing *with* India, and whose achievements were thus the more transitory. Sir John Kaye's* character of Dalhousie is the character of a whole type. "He had but one idea of them [the Indians]—an idea of a people habituated to the despotism of a dominant race. He could not understand the tenacity of affection with which they clung to their old traditions. He could not sympathise with the veneration which they felt for their ancient dynasties.... He had not the faculty to conceive that men might like their own old ways of government, with all their imperfections and corruptions about them, better than our more refined systems.... He could not form a true dramatic conception of the feelings with which the representative of a long line of kings may be supposed to regard the sudden extinction of his royal house by the decree of a stranger and an infidel, or the bitterness of spirit with which a greybeard chief, whose family from generation to generation had enjoyed ancestral powers and privileges, might contemplate his lot when suddenly reduced to poverty and humiliation by an incursion of aliens of another colour and another creed."

The estimate formed by the Steam Intellect Englishman of the Indian character was based not, perhaps, on racial prejudice but on observation. But observation unchecked by sympathy or understanding is a most faulty guide, and the resulting judgment soon degenerated into racial prejudice or something indistinguishable from it. By 1857 we were half-strangers in India, arrogant and aloof: and our aloofness deprived us of any foreknowledge of the revolt our arrogance had provoked.

INDIANS WERE different to us: therefore they were inferior—and not merely technically but *morally* inferior, wholly inferior, and that to such an extent as to put their very humanity in doubt.* We had ceased to see Indians as our fellow-beings. I am sure that this is the explanation for the fantastic brutality with which the Mutiny was suppressed. Certainly our forces were enraged by accounts—sometimes grossly exaggerated—of the atrocities committed by the sepoys: "if I had them in my power today," wrote Nicholson after reading of the massacre of the English at Delhi, "I would inflict the most excruciating tortures I could think of on them with a perfectly easy conscience," and much else besides. Certainly we were terribly outnumbered—36,000 British troops faced 257,000 sepoys and heaven knows how many non-military rebels. Certainly this was no time for half-measures: Kaye, a humane man, did not doubt that "the severity of the hour would be the humanity of all time." But neither the logic of retribution, nor fear wholly, nor any grounds of public policy can explain—let alone justify—the wild vengeance which we let loose, its indiscriminate nature, or the self-righteous hysteria or cruel levity with which it was often accompanied.

Before May was out, on the march down from Ambala, villagers believed to be guilty of inflicting injuries upon fugitives from Delhi were seized and condemned after the most rudimentary trial; before execution they were pulled by the hair, pricked with bayonets, and forced by soldiers to eat cows' flesh while officers stood by smiling. Before

* I have relied heavily on Sir John Kaye's *History of the Sepoy War in India*. It is not often that the most thorough, judicious, and profound account of an event like the Mutiny is published within six years of its close. Kaye's work is an exception; and what he leaves unknown or unexplained is not likely to be discovered or explained now.

* This conviction of our moral superiority was, of course, strengthened by the subsequent atrocities of the sepoys, which we attributed to an irrational and innate villainy. Yet these excesses are explicable, if not excusable. The sepoys' minds were disordered by fear. As Sir George Trevelyan points out, their leaders were too criminal to be forgiven, too successful to be forgotten. Their aim was to implicate their comrades beyond hope of pardon: to place between them and their old life a river of blood (an idea perfectly familiar, in Europe, to Danton and Hitler). They had to get rid of all witnesses. Fantastically ignorant of our resources, they imagined that they had only to kill off every Englishman in India to leave England a nation of children and widows.

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the middle of June a sort of judicial mincing machine had been set up in Benares, hanging old and young with indiscriminate ferocity, "as though they had been pariah dogs or jackals." Even children who mischievously flaunted the rebel colours were hanged. Volunteer hanging parties, with amateur executioners, swept the surrounding countryside. One gentleman boasted of the numbers he had hung "in an artistic manner" from mango-trees, with elephants for drops; his victims were whimsically strung up "in the form of a figure of eight." In Allahabad in June, Indians were slain, regardless of age or sex, after scant trial or no trial at all. When Renaud set out for Cawnpore, he hung forty-two by the roadside in two days, twelve of them, according to Sir William Russell, "because their faces were turned the wrong way. All the villages in his front were burnt." In his wake he left a desert of burnt, deserted villages, untilled fields, and dangling corpses rotting in the heat.

These examples are chosen almost at random. They are what we would call—if committed by foreigners—atrocities. They are in no way untypical of what was going on in all parts of India affected by the Mutiny. All were committed before either of the two massacres at Cawnpore, which are generally regarded as the highwater mark of Indian treachery and infamy. They cannot thus be justified by them, and may in part have provoked them. All were highly damaging to that universal respect for the law on which all government rests, and thus calculated in the long run to postpone rather than hasten the restoration of order. Some—those of Renaud, for instance—were directly and immediately prejudicial to the success of our military operations. We depended on Indians for supplies, transport, information, service—everything: and how could these be got if every Indian fled in terror before us?

I could list further acts of cruel injustice—the wholesale sack and slaughter after the capture of Delhi, for instance, in which guilty and innocent, ill-wishers and well alike were robbed or put to the sword—all illustrating one fact, that we had ceased to regard Indians as individuals; that we had ceased to discriminate between them; that we regarded them only as a mass, known by its colour, judged hostile by its actions, to be crushed indiscriminately. And from this failure to discriminate sprang a racial bitterness which naturally clouded all the rest of our time in India.

IN NO PLACE, unfortunately, was the divorce between English and Indian more absolute than in the pre-Mutiny Bengal army —precisely, indeed, where it was most necessary that the union should have been close.

I remember seeing old prints of the Bengal army at the turn of the 19th century, which really do seem to portray a sort of easy, informal family life. The regiment in those days, as Kaye says, was the officers' home, his sepoys his children (*babalog*, or babies). He had no distractions outside; intercourse with Europe was rare, English women almost non-existent. Outside the mess, his only interest was in his sepoys, to whom he chatted off duty, whose comfort he ensured, whose wrongs he redressed. In the evenings he and the Indian officer would smoke and gossip in his bungalow; at night, as often as not, he slept with an Indian mistress. He did not merely command Indians: he was half an Indian himself.

The next fifty years twisted this idyll almost beyond recognition. An excessive centralisation robbed the officer of his power. His rights to reward or punish, promote or demote, became ever more circumscribed. From a patriarch or despot, he shrank to the mere mouthpiece of the Adjutant-General's office. His decisions were frequently set aside; he was forced to eat dirt before his men; he looked a fool himself, and was powerless to protect them from the folly or pedantic bad faith of headquarters.

It was fortunate indeed for us that the Mutiny itself immediately shattered the centralisation which had done so much to cause it. The telegraph wires were constantly cut, communications were slow and uncertain. John Lawrence at Rawalpindi wrote to Canning, the Governor-General, on June 10th,

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1857, and had received no reply by the end of July. Delhi fell to us in September; yet rumours of its fall in June were believed, for want of other information, by the Governor-General himself. This breakdown of communications is often represented as a great disaster to us. Hodson of Hodson's Horse for one thought otherwise, and I am sure he was right. "Well, here we are," he said in May, "the wires cut north, south, east, and west; not a soul can interfere with us; we have the cracking of the nut in our own way."

It was the rupture of the normal chain of command which gave men like Hodson and Nicholson their chance: they grabbed the reins which the senile and unfit were compelled to drop and restored order in their own utterly disorderly way. "Had there been no struggle for life and death," wrote Edwardes, "when would Neville Chamberlain and John Nicholson have attained the rank of brigadier-general? . . . Amidst the ruins of the regular army these two irregular pillars stand boldly up against the sky, and I hope the tomnoddies admire their architecture." British rule in India, comments Kaye, was saved by men "who did what they had no right to do"; and it was the severed telegraph wires which enabled them to do it.

THE FABRIC of pre-Mutiny army life was further shaken by the greed of the central government, which actually robbed regiments of half their officers—and those the best. Ceaselessly active, its appetite for administrators was insatiable. New territories to be governed, surveys and public works to be directed, new irregular regiments to be raised: these were now the plum jobs, and regimental soldiering became a bore. Not only were regiments denuded of officers, but those that remained had no heart for the job: nearly all were in restless expectancy or sullen despair.

As important as any of these factors—if not more so—was the increasingly English tone of society. English books, magazines, and newspapers, English morals and habits, English stiffness and etiquette, above all, English women: all these raised an insurmountable barrier between the Indian and ourselves, and utterly destroyed the old friendly intimacy and informality which had helped to make our predominance both effective and endurable. And thus it came about that by 1857 the officer riding at the head of his company might—almost certainly did—know far less of what was passing in his men's minds than the *guru* squatting half-naked under the peepul-tree at the wayside.

The extent of this ignorance was revealed when in 1857 officer after officer swore to the absolute staunchness of regiment after regiment, each one in fact poised on the very brink of mutiny. On May 22nd, angered by aspersions cast at his regiment, Colonel Simpson wrote to the *Englishman*, furiously protesting its "utmost loyalty." A day or two later his officers were butchered and he lucky to escape with a ball through his arm. The commanders of regiments about to be disarmed at Peshawar "unanimously and violently declared their confidence in their men. One advised conciliation, and another threatened us that *his men would resist and take the guns*" (my italics: an odd proof of loyalty, surely!). When Nicholson handed them packets of intercepted letters, proving the men were up to the hilt in sedition, the colonels were more angry than interested. Colonel Spottiswoode of the 55th blew his brains out at the disarming of his regiment. When Nicholson disarmed the 33rd, its colonel burst into tears, protesting that he would answer with his life for the loyalty of every man. Such scenes as these were reproduced all over India. The blind confidence they illustrate has its touching side; completely misplaced as it was, however, it argues that, for all they knew of their men, the officers might as well have been in another continent.

And thus the mutiny spread from regiment to regiment, spurred on by mysterious murmurs and fears, directed—if at all—by unseen hands, moving rapidly in the vacuum left by over-centralisation, over-confidence, and the remoteness of our officers from those they were supposed to command.

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PERHAPS IF the Mutiny had been confined to the army, it might have been stamped out as quickly as it arose, leaving only superficial scars behind. But it was not. Indians have constantly stressed the *national* character of the Mutiny. They often speak of the Mutiny as "the war of Indian independence": Savarkar wrote a famous history of it, banned in British India and published therefore in Paris. Reacting against this view, British writers have tended to over-emphasise the *military* character of the revolt, its local and particular causes, its lack of general significance, its opposition not to British rule as a whole but to mistaken aspects of that rule.

I am not sure the facts support either side. To speak of "nationalism" in connection with the semi-feudal India of 1857 is certainly an absurd anachronism.* It is equally absurd to deny, however, that behind the obvious, spectacular, and carefully recorded military aspects of the Mutiny can be discerned the outline, vague yet unmistakable, of a vast civil convulsion. In many parts of India our administration entirely collapsed and all that we had achieved was swept away. No mutiny, perhaps, no civil convulsion: the two are certainly connected yet absolutely distinct.

In the so-called North-Western Provinces—the "model" provinces, our most vaunted administrative triumph—the civil population rose quite independently of the sepoys: without their presence or aid, before they had risen, or after they had left the district. In some places sepoys, still loyal, actually helped us in our attempts to restore order. In the parts of India, moreover, where the revolt was confined to soldiery, its effects were temporary and superficial. A day or two of massacre, loot, and arson, then the sepoys would make off for home or Delhi and our authority was swiftly restored. It was not the violence of the sepoys that caused the Governor-General to write officially of the North-Western Provinces as "lost to us" or Henry Lawrence to say of Oudh, "throughout the province, *all is anarchy*." Indeed, the truth was—as Kaye points out—that in these provinces and in some others "all classes with any power of rising had risen against us"; our government consequently "collapsed like a house of cards—it had no more substance or stability." We found ourselves powerless and friendless. How had this come about?

THE EXPLANATION, I am sure, lies somewhere in the paradoxical nature of modern British imperialism. To the traditional imperialist pure and simple, order is self-justifying, its establishment and maintenance the supreme, overriding obligation. In controlling a country, therefore, his thoughts and actions are directed to this one end. All that can strengthen his position is fostered, all that can weaken restrained. Forces, energies, and institutions in the subject people are not seen as good or bad in themselves, but good or bad in so far as they can be harnessed to his single purpose. Reform he views with the same cold eye. I do not write disparagingly. Order is in itself a great blessing: nothing can flourish without it. A pure imperialist of this type, moreover, is commonly tolerant of native ways of life, respectful of native rights, and friendly to native participation in the Government: where others see only brakes or inefficiency and obstacles in the path of progress, he wisely finds sources of strength.

The beginning of the 19th century saw the rise of a quite new school of imperialism: *a radical imperialism*. Out of the conflict inherent in this idea the Mutiny sprang. It was the central tenet of the new school that we were in India not merely to rule it but to reform it—to change it out of all recognition. Progress must not merely be maintained. It must be ruthlessly hastened, even at the expense of stability, by the central authority. There was no time to consult Indians, to pander to their tastes, to associate them with what was being done: there was too much to do.

On assuming the government of the annexed Punjab, Henry Lawrence, an imperialist of the older type, dealt more lightly than was generally approved with the native aristocracy and respected their tradi-

* As Edward Thompson once pointed out, Indians commonly seem to lack a sense of history.

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tional rights. This meant that much revenue which could have been well used elsewhere was alienated in grants and pensions, often to quite worthless recipients. Lawrence was quite prepared to tolerate such abuses, as not the most expensive means of reconciling the influential classes to our rule. Such an outlook was quite incomprehensible to the new imperialism: if one can only rule by tolerating abuses, why rule at all? Again, I do not write disparagingly. The intemperate reforms of this school were based on lofty motives: on a deep sympathy for the poor, backward, and oppressed, on a passion for what we would now call social justice. Yet the results of trying to do so much were to shake the state to its foundations and thus jeopardise our power to do anything at all.

THE TWO great pre-Mutiny issues on which the new imperialism met and routed the old were, one, policy towards the native states and, two, policy towards the native aristocracy. To men such as Colonel Sleeman, reared in the old school, the native states were valuable breakwaters: "when they are all swept away," he predicted, "we shall be left to the mercy of our native army, which may not always be sufficiently under our control." Like Sleeman, Colonel Low of the Supreme Council in Calcutta had seen everything the native states had to offer in the way of vicious misgovernment, waste, cruelty, sloth, and inefficiency: and it was not little. Yet he too was convinced of the impolicy of annexing native states whenever the occasion presented itself, for the most trivial reasons and often in defiance of the letter or spirit of long-standing agreements.

The cautions of Low and Sleeman were powerless to check Dalhousie's expansive zeal. The native states were to him at best tiresome anachronisms, at worst sinks of every known political iniquity. Lying as they often did between one British territory and another, they were inimical to the efficiency and uniformity even of our own administration. The idea that people might prefer a tyranny to which they were accustomed, and which was exercised by men of their own race, to a novel tyranny imposed by aliens seems not to have crossed his mind.

"As it lies in the midst of other British districts," wrote Dalhousie of Jhansi, "the possession of it as our own will tend to the improvement of the general internal administration of our possessions in Bundelkhand. That its incorporation with the British territories will be greatly for the benefit of the people of Jhansi a reference to the results of experience will suffice to show." "The results of experience," comments Kaye drily, "have since shown to what extent the people of Jhansi appreciated the benefits of that incorporation." The consequence of Dalhousie's annexations was to spread insecurity far and wide; no native ruler felt sure that his house would not perish with him. With the annexation of Oudh, the loss of confidence was complete: who could be safe, it was asked, if we treated thus a state which—whatever its faults—had always been our most faithful ally?

Thus, in our passion for expansion and standardisation, we knocked down several of the pillars which might have supported us in our need and shook them all. In our dealings with the native aristocracy we showed an equally astonishing disregard for interests potentially harmonious with our own and thus, indirectly, for our own interests. If the primary duty of a State is to maintain and strengthen itself, it is a duty which the British in India seem at this time entirely to have neglected. Instead of acting as a tranquillising and stabilising force, they appear to have regarded themselves as the agents of a veritable agrarian revolution.

The idea of a native aristocracy was clearly an abomination to us. We wished to see nothing between us and the masses; we wished to see nothing strong and self-reliant except ourselves. It was an axiom with us that whoever we found in enjoyment of wealth or social position must have acquired it by force and fraud and maintained it by cruelty and oppression. And thus with a perfectly clear conscience, in province after province, we went to work with the inhuman precision of a gigantic planing machine,

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reducing Indian society to a dead level. Where rights existed without documentary proof we swept them away; where documents were produced we ignored them, pleading defects in the character or conduct of the owner; forced sales and heavy taxation sped on the process; we acted in numberless pretexts and in numberless ways.

Warnings of what would happen were not wanting. Mr. William Edwards, magistrate at Budaon, pointed out ceaselessly that, "although the old families were being displaced fast, we could not destroy the memory of the past, or dissolve the ancient connection between them and their people." In the event of an insurrection, he continued, "we should find this great and influential body, through whom we can alone hope to keep under and control the rural masses, ranged against us on the side of the enemy, with their hereditary followers and retainers rallying around them, in spite of our attempts to separate their interests." Many pointed to the folly of such arbitrary behaviour in the provinces out of which the Bengal army was recruited: if we persist, warned a Calcutta paper in 1838, "we shall very soon have to trust for our security to British troops alone."

ALL THESE and other warnings were neglected. And thus when the Mutiny broke out we found ourselves confronted by revolution. It was led by men whom British rule had deprived not only of their land and privileges, but of all hope of profitable or honourable employment; by ruined men forbidden by us to be either drone or bee; by men who had nothing left to lose; by men who were our natural allies but who had been alienated by our doctrinaire egalitarianism, ruthlessly and recklessly applied. Edwards's experiences are perfectly typical: "In Budaon the mass of the population rose in a body, and the entire district became a scene of anarchy and confusion. The ancient proprietary body took the opportunity of murdering or expelling their successors, and resumed possession of their hereditary estates. . . . To the large number of these sales [forced sales by decree of our civil courts] and the operation of our revenue system, which has had the result of destroying the gentry of the country and breaking up the village communities, I attribute solely the disorganisation of this and the neighbouring districts. . . . The rural classes would never have joined the sepoys, whom they hated, had not these causes of discontent already existed. . . . Those who could really control the vast masses of the rural population were interested in bringing about a state of disturbance and general anarchy. . . ."

Sir George Trevelyan writes of the forces which converged on Cawnpore: "Intelligence of the revolt attracted to the spot the entire available blackguardism of the neighbourhood. The disloyal and insolvent landlords for thirty miles about called out their tenantry and retainers. Some chieftains brought two hundred armed followers; others four hundred. One rajah came with a tail of forty score: while Bhowany Sing, whom Nanukchund designates as 'that old and notorious scoundrel,' marched into the rebel camp at the head of 1,200 matchlock men. No one seems to have entertained any doubt as to the final extinction of our sway. The old order of things had disappeared for ever, and it behoved any feudal leader who had ambition or necessities to be present and ready to assert himself ere the new order was definitely established. . . ."

Blackguards, disloyal and insolvent, old and notorious scoundrels—in these Falstaffian figures with their scarecrow armies we see the last protest of the old India against the dead level which crushed it. They failed: and across the dead level, across a plain strewn with broken powers and thwarted energies the British marched to a bleak and glorious victory.

But not, indeed, to a final victory. The unity, uniformity, and equality which we successfully reimposed on India shaped the agitation of the future; gave to the movement for Indian independence its national, mass and democratic character. In this one sense, and in defeat rather than in the possibility of victory, the Indian Mutiny was truly the war of Indian Independence.

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Letter from New York

Naming Names

The Arthur Miller Case

WHEN ARTHUR MILLER, author of *Death of a Salesman*, was indicted for contempt of Congress this February, the American liberal public was not aroused. The Civil Liberties Union in New York has about thirty such cases in its files; none of them, including the Miller case, has awakened much interest. This may be attributed to apathy ("People feel that this subject has had it," Mr. Miller says) or, in this particular instance, to a sense that nothing bad can really happen to the husband of Marilyn Monroe. Mr. Miller, if convicted, is liable to a year in prison and a fine of $1,000. But these are maximums; they represent a *potential* of punishment which the government, even if it convicts the playwright, may shrink from imposing under the circumstances. Meanwhile, another case, parallel with Mr. Miller's, that of a trade union organiser named Watkins, is before the Supreme Court; if the Watkins conviction should be reversed, the Miller case might be dropped altogether. And even if the Watkins decision were upheld, the Miller case might still be won, since it presents small points of difference, and even if the Miller case were lost in the lower courts, appeals would follow. In short, even assuming the worst, a long time would have to pass before Mr. Miller would be behind bars; the slow workings of American justice make such a prospect seem unreal and, considering the persons, positively fantastic. Off the screen, it is hard to summon up a vision of Miss Monroe talking to Mr. Miller (wearing convict garb) across a prison partition while stony guards look on. We have seen this scene too often in the movies to accept it in real life; the plot, too, is familiar; the husband is doing time for having refused to inform on his buddies. Mr. Miller's last play, *A View from the Bridge*, was about an informer.

Yet this is precisely the issue which the courts will consider: the refusal to play the informer before a Congressional Committee. Called before the House Un-American Activities Committee last June, Mr. Miller declined to name the names of persons he had seen at Communist-sponsored meetings, although he testified freely about his own past association with Communist-front groups. He was not the first witness to find himself impaled on a dilemma, that is, to be willing to talk about himself and unwilling to talk about others. But he was almost the only prominent figure heard by the committee who did not either tell all or take refuge in the Fifth Amendment, which protects a witness against self-incrimination. Against the ritual reply droned out so often during these past years—"I decline to answer on the ground that it might tend to incriminate me"—Mr. Miller's forthrightness struck a note of decided nonconformity.

REGARDLESS OF the legalities, in the eyes of the public, every witness who invoked the Fifth Amendment appeared to be guilty, and this fact was traded on by Senator McCarthy and other Congressional investigators, who delighted in confronting America with a parade of witnesses who, one after another, invoked the Fifth Amendment and were handed down from the witness-stand with an air of crisp satisfaction, just as though they had confessed to a long bill of dark particulars. Some of these witnesses, like Mr. Miller, had never been Communists; others had broken, years before, with the Party. But to the ordinary newspaper reader, every witness who used the Fifth Amendment was a dyed-in-the-wool member of what was felt to be a Communist conspiracy to keep the truth from him personally. The right to know took on the character of a basic democratic right which was being trampled upon by these silent witnesses with impunity. It was the public's right to know and Congress's right to ask that Mr. Miller challenged on June 21, in his testi-

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mony before the Un-American Activities Committee. Or, to be more exact, he conceded the committee's right to ask him any questions about himself (a right I am not sure the committee really possessed), but denied its right to extract from him, under threat of contempt proceedings, the names of other people he had known in the Communist movement. As the transcript of the hearing shows, he spoke at length (though frequently interrupted) about the motives that had impelled him to taken an interest in Communist groups and what he called the "mood" that kept him in the Communist orbit up to 1948. He remained polite and informative, despite a good deal of badgering and repeated attempts to trap him in merely verbal contradictions. But when it came to giving names he balked, and this balking, in the view of his questioners, amounted to a limitation on Congress's power to investigate. The contempt citation against him was voted eventually by the House of Representatives—373 to 9.

Congress's power to investigate had already been somewhat limited by the courts. Witnesses, the courts have decided, cannot be called before a Congressional committee, except to testify on matters involving legislation. Mr. Miller was called, officially, as a witness in a study of passports; a numbered bill on passports had been put in the hopper by Representative Francis Walter, the chairman of the Un-American Activities Committee, and Mr. Miller was told, at the outset: "We're investigating passports." The first questions put him dealt closely with his passport history—the passport that had been given him in 1947, and the question of what oath he had sworn then (like everyone else, he had sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States), the passport that had been refused him in 1954 (when he had been invited to go to Brussels for a performance of *The Crucible*), the passport he had applied for four-and-a-half weeks prior to the hearing and on which he had still received no reply (in the end, he was given a passport, for six months only, to go to England and join Miss Monroe and see *A View from the Bridge*). These questions could be thought to have some remote bearing on legislation: his experiences with the passport bureau of the State Department might, in an ideal state of affairs, have prompted some remedial law-making, to curb the high-handed behaviour of passport officials. But the committee soon departed from the theme of passports to interrogate Mr. Miller about his past. They wanted to know whether he had opposed the Smith Act, which makes it a crime to teach or advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence; whether he had signed various protests and petitions; what his attitude had been toward Ezra Pound; how he felt about Elia Kazan, once a director of his plays, who had testified before a committee and named names (had there not, in fact, been a "break" between them?), whether he had not attacked the Un-American Activities Committee itself and satirised Congressmen in a skit.

What emerged from this dogged questioning was the fact, which no one denied, that Arthur Miller in the past had some affiliation with Communists and had been critical of some legislators and legislation. This was not and is not a crime, though the tone of the questioning implied that it was; at one point, the chairman, Mr. Walters, had to step in to announce to Mr. Miller, with an air of largesse, that to disagree with the Smith Act was his right as a citizen (some of the other questioners seemed not to be aware of this). Moreover, everything that emerged from the testimony was previously known to the committee and to the public as well, for the whole matter had been aired in the *newspapers; it was a newspaper campaign* against Mr. Miller, perhaps, that had first drawn the committee's attention to him, even before his wedding plans were known—he had been called an improper person to write a documentary film on juvenile deliquency. Long before this, he had been blacklisted by Hollywood and by television. In short, no fresh information was gained from the hearing, except possibly by Mr. Miller, who had forgotten the names of some organisations he had sponsored.

THE COMMITTEE indeed showed a keen reluctance to taking in any new material. Mr. Miller was eager to talk about his present views, and the committee kept turning him a deaf ear. They wanted to hear about the past—that is, they wanted him to repeat, under interrogation, facts they already knew. Mr. Miller, for instance, wished to say that he had changed his mind about Ezra Pound, toward whom he now felt less anger than he had just after the War; but the committee was bent only on reading him aloud what he had written about Pound *then*: "You confirm that you wrote that about this anti-Communist writer?" "At the present time . . .," Mr. Miller kept proffering throughout the hearing, but the committee was not interested in what he thought or might say "at the present time," though once he made them sit up and take notice when he announced that he not only *had* been against the Smith Act but that he was against the Smith Act now. "Right now? Right this minute?" his questioner exclaimed, taken aback. "Right this minute," Mr. Miller replied. This led to a long, meandering discussion in which stirrings of curiosity were evident among the legislators. "Would you approve of someone writing a *poem* advocating

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the overthrow of the government?" asked one Congressman, in wonder. Mr. Miller answered that he would or that at least he would not disapprove of it, and the curiosity slowly flickered out, as though the witness were a phenomenon too weird to command more than a passing interest. It wakened again, briefly, at the very end of the hearing, when one Congressman, more sympathetic to Mr. Miller than the majority, asked him with what appeared to be genuine solicitude, "Why do you write so morbidly, so sadly?" And then, offering something positive: "Why don't you use that magnificent talent of yours in the cause of anti-Communism?"

Meanwhile, they had asked him to identify two persons as having been present at certain meetings, years before. Mr. Miller was not asked to supply their names; the committee, of course, already knew them. All the committee wanted was for Mr. Miller to agree that two persons, whom they themselves named for him, had been present at those meetings. This was the climax of the hearing. Ever since a subpoena had been served on him in Reno, Nevada, while he was getting a divorce, the committee had been trying to find out whether Mr. Miller was going to be "co-operative." The investigator who served him with the subpoena invited him to have a little talk. "I think I could be helpful to you," he suggested, mentioning other writers and actors whom he had been "helpful" to under the same circumstances. "A lot of them," he observed, "have become my very good friends." He started sounding out Mr. Miller by asking him, as if idly: "What do you think of Lee Cobb? He's a great guy, don't you think?" Lee Cobb, who had had the leading part in *Death of a Salesman*, had testified before the committee, naming names. Mr. Miller agreed that Lee Cobb was a great guy, which seemed to the investigator to promise that Mr. Miller might be co-operative, after all. "You know," he volunteered, "you surprise me. I expected you to be rougher." But until Mr. Miller was three-quarters through his testimony before the committee itself, nobody, except his lawyer, knew how he was going to answer when the crucial question was put, and, for his part, Mr. Miller actually imagined that he might get away without having the question put at all.

This was a hopeful delusion. It is clear from his testimony that Mr. Miller and his questioners were utterly at cross purposes. He supposed, to judge from his attitude, that these Congressmen he was facing were authentically seeking knowledge and he sought earnestly to explain his views to them, rather in the manner of an author discussing his work at a writers' forum. He brought in Socrates and the Spanish Civil War and how it had felt to be a Jew in Brooklyn witnessing anti-semitism during the early Hitler years. To the Congressmen, all this was a matter of total indifference. For them, the whole hearing hinged on a single point: was the witness willing to name others or not? That was the litmus test. Mr. Miller kept trying to explain to them what kind of man he was, but the Congressmen knew that they would learn what kind of man he was, very simply, when he let them know whether he would play the informer or not. And, in a sense, they were right. This really was the issue, and all the rest was cat-and-mouse play.

IN THE PHRASE, *play the informer*, lies the curious and twisted significance of these hearings. For the committee's purpose, it was not necessary that Mr. Miller *be* an informer; he was merely being asked to *act* like one, to define himself as the kind of person who would interpose no obstacle between them and their right to know. The two persons he was required to identify as Communists (for that was what the questions amounted to) had already been named as Communists by other witnesses, dozens of other witnesses, no doubt. That was how the committee had their names. The committee was not seeking information from Mr. Miller; it was applying a loyalty test. And for Mr. Miller it was not in reality a question of betraying specific people (who had already been denounced, so that his testimony could hardly have done them further harm), but of accepting the *principle* of betrayal as a norm of good citizenship. As a leading playwright with a wide audience, he was being asked to set an example of civic obedience; not Mr. Miller but the committee was to judge whether the disclosure of those names served any useful purpose. And if it did not serve a useful purpose, if evidently no harm could come from it, then he would seem to be straining at a gnat. He alleged conscientious scruples in defending his refusal, but the whole purport of such hearings is to reduce the private conscience to a niggling absurdity.

Mary McCarthy

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David Riesman and Eric Larrabee

Autos in America

History catches up with Ford

SO FAR as we know, though he lived until 1929, Thorstein Veblen never owned a car. During his years at Stanford, he drove an old mare—as lovingly described by R. L. Duffus in *The Innocents at Cedro*. Veblen, of course, was a functionalist, a believer in engineering and a hater of show and waste. Probably he would have thought any kind of car needless, just as he thought furniture mostly needless—and washed dishes, after they had accumulated a few days, by turning a hose on them. But it would be interesting to know what he would make of the rôle played by the automobile in America today.

Perhaps he would not quite have agreed with the late Justice Brandeis, who used to speak angrily of the way in which the auto gave the working-man a false sense of power which he then dissipated on the streets. Brandeis felt that power should be *earned* through activity, through character, not by pressing an accelerator. He was a Southerner, however, and shared many of the Southern agrarian views towards industrialism—he hated Detroit as a symbol of all he thought wrong with America; his attitudes in this resembled Gandhi's. Veblen, on the other hand, admired industry and, having started life as a farmer, had few agrarian illusions; he would not have begrudged power to the working-man. He would only have hated to see him seduced—as Veblen would surely have seen the buyer of modern American cars to be—by glamour.

To find a car today that Veblen would not have despised, you would have to go to the Jeep or the Volkswagen. Others he would doubtless reject as making too many concessions to the human propensity for surrounding useful objects with symbolic overtones, or to that even more human tendency to let means to an end become ends in themselves. Nor could he attribute these departures from strict functionalism simply to the chicanery of auto-makers; for he would have to observe that the few companies which have survived to the present day are those that learned to obey the whim of the consumer rather than the Johanssen gauges of the engineers, who have now had to take second place to the designer and the market researcher. The auto itself, meanwhile, has come more and more to conceal its ancestral descent from surface transport and to engross a number of hitherto unrelated images—of a living-room, a juke box, a jet plane, or even (in certain hard-top models) a lavatory.

Henry Ford, unconscious Veblenite at heart, held out as long as he could. His Model T sold for as low as $290 in 1924, when the number of cars on the scene varied greatly in performance and price, some of them selling for fifteen times as much. These

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prices reflected the separation of American classes, as well as other disparities—between country and city, with their diverse clearances and road conditions; between men, mechanically adept, and women, mechanically prissy; between the Stutz-bearcatted, coon-coated young and their sedate parents, driving Marmons and Pierce-Arrows; or between doctors wedded to their air-cooled Franklins and salesmen who swore by their sturdy Studebakers.

Ford made no effort to accommodate such variety in style or colour, let alone appeal to the small minority who wanted and could afford, a generation ago, something more than transport *per se*; and he had as little love for trim and whim in the plant itself as in the car. He detested the white-collar worker or, for that matter, any appearance of methodical management. He preferred creating deliberate confusion to letting his trusted subordinates forget their dependence on his own judgment, and he never lost his canny rural mistrust of bookkeepers and banks. These two he also linked with Wall Street, which he fought and hated, and he would be as aghast today to see Ford stock on the market as to see the Ford Foundation investing in the social sciences.

Yet history, which he had called "bunk," caught up with him before he died. It was partly his own doing. As the great innovator of the assembly line and the five-dollar-a-day wage, he was instrumental in creating an economy far too bounteous to be satisfied with the Model T. Like other puritans, Ford himself was willing to reject the "given" of history only on the side of production; on the side of consumption he had no talent, no appetites, no emulative envy. For his customers, however, as now in many underdeveloped countries, the automobile was the very symbol of an end to sumptuary traditions —a statement that things need not be always as they are.

The Styling Section Takes Over

MACHINERY, seldom the neutral agent it is commonly said to be, redefines aspirations as rapidly as it absorbs them; and Ford's unending stream of inexpensive cars released exactly those demands that he had tried to stifle. The possession of a personal power plant under standing orders not only diffused a sense of infinite industrial potentiality; it made necessary all the roads and auxiliary services which have since homogenised the auto market—bringing the country to town, penalising the idiosyncratic vehicle, and admitting women and children to the act of purchase that was previously a male prerogative.

As cars became easier to make than to sell, their shape and colour became major sales points, with the inevitable result that control of the car as a physical object began to shift from the engineers to what Detroit calls the Styling Section. This institution is virtually a personal monument to one man, Harley Earl, a vice-president of General Motors and the first industrial designer to attain that rank, who established the principle that "appearance sells cars" as GM policy. Beginning with the 1927 LaSalle, Earl can claim to have designed a total of 32,000,000 automobiles; more than any other single person he has brought about the auto's present apotheosis as a piece of wildly imaginative metallic sculpture. To take only one example of his commanding position in the industry: when he decided on a wrap-around windshield for the 1954 models, he got it—despite the uncertainty of engineers that it could be mass-produced, despite the image-distortion it produces at the sides, and despite the fact that mass-producing it required fabulous waste and virtual command of the country's laminated-glass facilities.

To be sure, even today a social archæologist could find legacies of Ford and Veblen. For one thing, a covert hunger for visible and tangible engineering is reasserted in the sports cars and their imitators, in the tachometers of a Jaguar or the boast of Chevrolet's Corvette to have "instrumentation as complete as a light plane's." For another, while the image of the General Motors line is set by the Buick, or to some extent by the Cadillac, the image of the Ford line is still set by the Ford, the cheapest car—to such a degree that, in

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interviews made for the *Chicago Tribune*'s study of the auto market, people spoke of the Mercury and even the Lincoln as a bigger Ford, where they would never speak of the Buick or Pontiac as a bigger Chevrolet.

Recently Ford has also been conducting market research, with the aim of developing the "optimum personality" for a new car in the middle-price range, since they wish to fill a competitive gap in the market which accounts, with post-war prosperity, for better than half of all car sales. Also, they have discovered that Ford owners do not graduate upward in the company line but think of the Mercury as more suitable for the flaming-youth trade than for the reliable, rising bourgeois. Perhaps, with this research in hand, the Ford engineers, too, will finally give way to the designers whose job it is to translate private whim into public property.

Appropriately enough, the new Ford car is to be named the Edsel—after Henry Ford's son who struggled so long, and so unsuccessfully, to persuade his father to abandon the Model T and compete with the gaudier GM line. Such an assertive and sentimental choice, at the same time, is a defeat for market research and a victory for Detroit's apparently invincible parochialism; the decision must have been made in defiance of every indication that the word "Edsel" is meaningless to most Americans, who would respond more readily to the connotations of elegance in some such name as Pageant, Jupiter, or Sabre.

The Sales Pitch

WHAT the designer does, of course, is build into the car a set of compensations for a variety of social strata, age groups, and even competing whims within the individual. His ideal is a car containing internalised appeals that anyone can shape in the image of his own private dream. Customers can rarely be consistent about their wants—that is, they are more likely to express a pious disapproval of excess chrome and horsepower than make purchases accordingly, and they are more fond of flirting with a desire than of embracing it. Few can really want to pilot a jet plane, but many can safely sample the jet-age aura by having a design "based on" the Sabrejet—as the '56 Plymouth, in a double page ad, stands silhouetted in front of an airborne F-86, or as a Ford stands next to a Thunderbolt which in turn echoes a guided missile. So, too, the consumer can be in tune with the future through his dashboard, which looks like an intergalactic control panel, and with his youthful past through the hardtop, which reminds him of roadsters and convertibles.

With all these overlapping attractions, there is little left for the salesman to do but mediate between the actualities of the car and any customer's unsatisfied preferences. Market-research interviews suggest that the sales pitch often serves this useful purpose, soothing the buyer in his self-indulgence by calling attention to features other than those in which he is most interested. People do seem to want both the crazy whimsicality of the Detroit package and an image of themselves as sensible—just as a first-time Cadillac purchaser, uneasy about his own motives, wants to be reassured by statistics on the car's economical gas consumption. Indeed a great deal of advertising, contrary to what one might expect, is read *after* rather than before the car is bought, and serves to re-persuade the reader that he has been wise and practical; Cadillac is well aware of this and its ads constantly pat the owner on the back for his good taste and rationality.

Of course cars today, in the neon-lit supermarkets of the bootleg lot, can also be bought on impulse, and are meant to be. This shift to high-turnover retailing is made possible not only by raised living standards and confidence in meeting time payments over thirty months (not long ago it was twenty-two months), but also by the fact that the cars are so much alike, and on the whole such well-built standard products, that a customer doesn't gain significantly by deliberating. The old-line dealer, with the cornucopia of the assembly line upended over his head, has been forced to make way for the super-salesmanship of the new-style huckster who has little overhead but advertising. Though the customer's saving may be slight, what

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with the "pack" and inflated credit terms, he no longer sees the excuse for a conventional mark-up when he has largely sold himself the car, with an assist from the designer, on the basis of the gamut of appeals built into it.

But this buyer's security is gained through a lowered range of choice. The difference between Caddy and Chevvy is much less than it was in the twenties; instead of lowering the price of low-price cars, as Henry Ford always wanted to do, more and more is built into them. Instead of keeping Chevrolet where it was, and allowing people as they made more money to get either a newer Chevrolet or a Pontiac or an Oldsmobile, Chevrolet itself moves up the ladder—becoming longer, flossier, and generally less functional. In a similar way the mass media also devote their revenues not to lowering costs but to beefing up the product—with colour for television and wider screens for the movies and, for magazines like *Life*, ever-more-elaborate projects of cultural diffusion. The automobile seems merely to have been more knowing and systematic in its effort to become a kind of moving platform of this American inflation, lifting as it is lifted, and carrying us all to heights of comfort and luxury quite beyond our other accoutrements, such as health services or schools.

The Annual Model

PEOPLE are fond of their cars; they like to talk about them—something which comes out very clearly in interviews—but their affection for any one car in particular rarely reaches enough intensity to become long-term. We find such attachments only among those groups that are not on the escalator of social mobility—the Bohemians who boast their deviant vehicles as symbols of not-caring, the few antiquarians of cars (a bit like the jazz fans who will hear only Dixieland), and the declining élite whose Daimlers and Duesenbergs have a timeless look about them. Impermanence of value and appearance is what suits the auto to a prosperity ethic, as we have said, and it is in turn dependent on that most essential of Detroit devices—the annual model change.

For if an automobile is to be traded in before it breaks down, it must have a sufficiently brassy allure to survive several bouts of ownership. Its design cannot be too virginal or take itself too seriously—it must appear airy and whimsical as well as solid and substantial; it must have the "reversible" quality of a game as well as the forward march of real life; it must have, as it were, one foot in reality and one foot out. Only in the "class" ads is the car a passport to palaces and playgrounds; elsewhere, neither owners nor designers have anything to gain from arbitrarily fixed levels of distinction. Better an auto should look temporary—with the shapes of models before and after it, year by year, stretching to the horizon—than look, like a Rolls or a Bentley, as though it stood for a terminal point in time and career.*

The forced obsolescence of annual change —changes less of engineering advance than of design and advertising gimmicks—carried Mass Production a step further than Ford had brought it. Henry S. seems to have been attracted by the idea of an all-plastic car, made out of soya beans and other renewable resources, so that it could be used up and thrown away; but not by the idea of selling new cars both to people without cars and people without new gadgets—people whose old but still useful cars could then be disposed of in backward colonial pockets, within and outside the country, as used TV sets can now be sold in Canada.

But the importance of the annual model-change is that it opened up production decisively to non-engineering concerns—to innovation oriented around design and style, like the cyclic variations of fashion in clothes. It has served to bureaucratise the consumer's whim, by subjecting fancy to periodicity—the periodicity of the tax return, the annual inventory, or in domestic planning the yearly

* In his remarkable essay, "What is American about America?" John A. Kouwenhoven discusses the characteristic additive pattern of our grid-iron city plans, quarter sections, jazz, skyscrapers, comic strips, and so on; the new car models, one coming after another, have a similarly satisfying regularity of march. See *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1956.

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decision (possibly conjoined with the purchase of a car) as to where to go for the holidays. For the regularity of the choice precludes all but a small degree of disconnected whimsy. George Katona and his colleagues of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Centre are even able (though within limits) to predict who will buy cars in a given year on the basis of a questionnaire concerning consumer finances and family hopes; people buy cars when they feel that next year will be as good as, or better than, this—so that the demand curve is psychologically a fairly malleable one, assuming that the limits of "saturation" are yet to be explored. To that extent, what is good for General Motors *is* good for the United States, and vice versa.

Metallic Fantasies

ONE can almost say that the designers' victory indicated that no one else could agree what a car was supposed to look like. It would be an extraordinary thing, were it not commonplace, that a piece of hard-goods weighing two tons and costing several thousand dollars should enter the realm of fashion with the facility of commodities much less costly and less intended to be useful. The resulting freedom of form has led to what many, including the authors, regard as the bloated design excesses of the post-war cars, their often egregiously vulgar profiles, and their moody changes in relationship of driver to road—getting rid of gear shifts and other connections to reality, including the wheel, now that power steering is upon us.

The designers seek to please everybody (and every motive within everybody) with interchangeable metallic mobiles. Variations are left, except at the jalopy and Jaguar extremes, to accessories which escape the untutored eye and not to the enormous status gap which once separated the cars of rich and poor. Even though the car has long since become a traditional manifesto of self-definition—almost as effective as accent, house, or clothing—the gradients of its prestige system have been so flattened that a basic similarity can simultaneously attest one's democratic impulse. The effect is one of blurred boundaries between individuals, classes, products, and sexes. Not only do cars come to look like one another, and like other things, but other things come to look like cars—so that we need not be surprised by the proliferation of Cadillac V-emblems on refrigerators, or a recent ad in which a model carrying a two-tone TV set is herself wearing a two-tone dress.

It is easy, of course, to overinterpret the motives of individual car owners, even those for whom polishing their cars has become a Sunday ritual. But we think it is evident nonetheless that Detroit has successfully learned to exploit their fragile and usually unspoken desires, their latent capacities for fashion and symbolism. Admittedly the manufacturers begin with an object that offers the intrinsic appeal of freedom—for adolescents, from parental planning and supervision; for the Negro, from Jim Crow; for married people, from their spouses; for a single woman, from the need for male escorts. If one of the attractions of the Western movie is the liberty of the cowboy to ride off into the sunset, leaving responsibility and complexity behind, the car—which doesn't even require saddling—is even handier. But what seems remarkable to us is how this invitation to masculine getaway has been retained at the same time that the trend from monotone to Technicolor—and from hard to soft, rounded lines—appeals to the feminine. A similar trend in men's clothing, towards a mixture of the sporty and colourful, may be facilitating the process.

Needless to add, this homogenisation—with its merging of tastes from the several social strata—raises problems as well as solves them. For, if we have uniform tastes, where will we get models for next year? Formerly the Big Three took care of this by letting the small independents (especially Nash and Studebaker) do their pioneering for them, or on occasion, as with Chrysler, pioneering themselves. But now that the Big Three look so much alike, both like themselves and like each other, Detroit has had to start creating its own minority cars. The Corvette, the Thunderbird, the Continental Mark II, and

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the Golden Hawk serve both to lend prestige to the line and to provide cars of the future which can readily be disowned if the future turns up somewhere else. That is to say, these experiments are intended to sound out consumer taste, perhaps to lead it, without committing the major lines—they are spies in enemy country.

European cars, which are often the models for these "American" experiments, can of course exercise a similar function. But we suspect that they will do so decreasingly as American taste backfires and takes on a defiant-minority prestige in Europe, like Jantzen bathing suits on the Riviera. (The Hillman Minx has already gone two-tone.) There is some evidence for this, including the recent article in ENCOUNTER, "I Dream of Motorcars," by the British artist Andrew Forge, who expressed his admiration for American willingness to design a car as though it were something else, as opposed to the British stuffiness of making cars which merely look like cars. What a curious cycle it would be if GM followed MG which in turn followed GM!

The "Brownian Movement" of Fashion

THERE is a further sense in which a minority is essential to the auto industry, in as much as a fashion, once it is accepted by everybody, is no longer a fashion but is on its way out. A fashion requires a label—the "New Look" in clothes or military policy, "Rock 'n Roll" in popular music, "Behavioural Science" in Academia. But if the label takes hold, then everything and its brother tries to crowd in on the success, and the label inevitably loses its distinctive meaning and attractiveness. The ground is then prepared for another shift in fashion, when a small group hitherto protected from the majority is discovered and labelled, and the process starts over.

One might argue, therefore, that the fashion cycle in auto design must sooner or later reverse itself, despite the desire of the industry to plan ahead for a series of minor model changes in the same direction, year after year. There are still objective limits on the governance of whim in automobiles as compared with, let us say, books or paintings. For instance, the silhouette can hardly be lowered further except, as in some new models, by reducing the diameter of the wheels. Cars are in this like dresses, which can only go up or down so far, in terms of hem or *décolletage*, and where there are—as Alfred Kroeber and Jane Richardson show in their history of these changes—long-term pendular movements of lowering and heightening, on which the year-to-year fashions play only minor modifications.

So too with cars, which for a while can get wider and longer and lower—but when the limits are reached an abrupt change must set in, or some other part of the car must become the focal point of "progress." (Paradoxically, people have been getting taller while cars and ceilings have been getting lower!) So too with the secular increase in horsepower—15 per cent between 1955 and 1956—which has already reached what some engineers are rash enough to claim is a virtual limit. And so too, as the makers of the new Continental believe, the limits of what they term "informal" taste have likewise been approached, and sooner or later customers will begin to move away from the rounded, the gaudy, the borax, in search of "formal" elegance through restraint in line and colour.* And our point here is only that, when such changes come, they may say less about the *Zeitgeist* than they appear to, and more about the "Brownian movement" of fashion *per se*.

The problem remains, moreover, of where minority tastes are to come from in a country where the range of choice is wider for many than it has ever been, yet the number of significant alternatives is actually small. We are struck, for one thing, with the relative lack of revolt among young people against the cars of their parents. They seem not to want the ostentatiously casual and sloganised jalopy of an earlier day, nor do they want hot-rods;

* The Continental experiment will be illuminating, since it is always possible that a car of such overt snob-appeal will appeal only to Upper Bohemians who can afford the snobbery but not the cash, whereas the New Rich will still prefer a Cadillac whose vulgarity matches their own.

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they don't mind driving their parents' Buick and they wouldn't be too unhappy with one of their own. In many cities, if not in a mega-city like New York, no high-school girl will go to a dance in a cab, or allow her own or her date's parents to drive her; the boy must have a car—and, what with dating beginning in the early teens, this causes more anxiety than any other social demand. Yet it stimulates no youthful challenge to the adult hierarchy of styles and habits.

Though the car has for many years been a decisive counter in adolescent life, young people now seem more sedate and set in their car-tastes; they also, again with minor exceptions, drive less recklessly—going steady as they are at fifteen, and marrying at 20 or 22, they are driving steady, too; and increasingly getting driving instruction as a part of their formal education. At the same time, whatever innovations have come from the hot-rod minority have been closely screened by Detroit, so that they again become a part of the process of homogenisation—or "restriction by partial incorporation," to use Harold Lasswell's phrase—in which the rebels and those they rebel against can come to terms, say, in a high-powered Oldsmobile hard-top which has gearing and carburation taken from the drag-race fanciers, but about as much relation to a teen-ager's car of the thirties as an automobile has to a bicycle. While they can still modify the cars they get, the young can hardly represent the shape of the future, as long as cars continue to represent youthfulness as part of their panopoly of symbolisms.

Minority Car-cultures

WHERE else are we to turn? Actually it is not impossible, by avoiding turnpikes and main highways, to find minority car-cultures in the United States. One such is that of the Mennonites in north-eastern Indiana, who typically drive twenty-year-old black Plymouth sedans. (Those who still drive black buggies are serviced by a Chicago manufacturer who is reported to know the varying specifications, the shades of blackness, of the different ascetic and unworldly sects.) But cars require too much capital equipment to be made for a dwindling poor minority—or even a dwindling aristocracy, which is in any event better served by Rolls Royces of whatever vintage. When their pre-war cars wear out, the Mennonites will have no choice but to gulp and go democratic, buying Buicks and Chevrolets like everyone else, reassuring themselves that they have no control in the matter and that all vulgarities of the damned are equally deplorable.

Indeed, to protest too much is often as vulgar as the most vulgar of cars, especially when a system of status-grading invites the ploy of underplaying and penalises those who take it too seriously. A characteristic anecdote of the present period is that of the aspiring Hollywood actor who sweats over the decision of what car to buy in order to impress his producer, only to discover that the latter drives a 1942 Lincoln. When a car has become that important as a positive or negative symbol, it has gained a functional autonomy of motives—much like that which one psychiatrist has observed among adolescent boys; believing it wrong to start dating until they have cars, they then become so involved in the care and upkeep of the machines that they have little time left for their dates (a theme implicit in some of the scenes of the movie "Rebel Without a Cause"). Hollywood, too, can hardly provide us with models when it is so imitative itself.

Looking elsewhere—as, for example, to modern architecture, with its wrap-around windows, low lines, and push-button mechanisms—we are less likely to find one-way influences than the reflection of general tendencies, like the "cult of effortlessness," in several aspects of the culture at once. Since people who want automatic steering, windows, and seat-adjusters often use their cars to go to and from eighteen holes of golf, it can hardly be that they can't stand the effort. More probably they enjoy that phenomenon which Professor Robert Spier of the University of Missouri calls "overdesign," the building into a mechanism of more features than it requires in order to work. One can find this in the super-rifles with which people

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hunt varmint, or the super-cameras with which they hunt banal exposures, or the fantastic fishing equipment for teasing perch —or indeed wherever in this abundant culture one looks, including the pastiche over-design of our colleges. The result has been to remove the car driver further and further from the engine, from the outdoors, and from the feel of the road—just as the king-size filter cigarette separates the smoker from his tobacco, or most super-highways eliminate any connection between the people on it and the local landscape or life, whether messy or quaint.

There are nonetheless among these general tendencies certain ascetic and Veblenian motifs—as, again, in modern architecture—which we would be rash to reject as irrelevant to car design. After all, the hot-rodders did challenge Detroit and, while their forays were absorbed and contained, the motives of their revolt remain unassuaged. There is a constant undercurrent of American admiration for the lean and mean which comes to the surface in such items as Carl Sandburg's outburst against our "fat-dripping prosperity," Russell Lynes' question: "What's So Good About Good Times?" or that prevalence of personal guilt at being overweight revealed by calorie-reduced foods. It seems to us, moreover, that as Americans become accustomed to luxury it will lose some of its glamour, and that eventually cars which restore a sense of reality and functionalism may find at least a modest hearing. Affection for the Model T, with its adaptability to home repair, is not entirely a matter of nostalgia.

Such cars will naturally not appeal to the Negro for whom the bulbous Detroit product is his first victory over Jim Crowed trains and buses, not to mention a substitute for decent housing; nor will they appeal to the factory worker to whom the car offers freedom not only to change jobs and drive to a plant fifty miles away but also to compete with the foreman for satisfactions which the job does not provide. But such cars *may* appeal to the many for whom "Do-it-yourself" is a luxurious necessity, an approved opportunity to escape from onerous white-collar consumption patterns into semi-Bohemian self-reliance. While it may be true —as Mr. Ralph Hansen, of the Monsanto Chemical Company, contends—that the ascetic modern house is mainly a masculine preference, which most older women with a taste for the frilly, the chintzy, and the comfy usually manage to defeat, we doubt that this is true among the college-educated younger generation, where it is the women who are the style-leaders on behalf of modern architecture (if there is a sex difference in taste) and restraint is a weapon brought to bear by the upper-educated against the *nouveaux riches*, as Veblen in his irony foresaw.

Sacred Laws on the Highway

Most of us know, or must suspect, how heavily our post-war prosperity—above its cushion of defence spending—rests on the twin supports of new cars and new suburbs; in fact, the latter depend primarily on the former. There the leisure life is inconceivable without the car, and the two-car garage is spreading even in the "tract" houses of the mass-produced middle-income communities—freeing the wives for sociability, shopping, and chauffeuring of children. In this connection one should think not only of the new suburbs ringing the old cities but also of those parts of the country, such as California, which may be regarded as suburban to the urban East. The car not only enhances the freedom of people to move west and southwest (and to Florida) but helps shape the image of the good life which these suburban states symbolise—a life in which at work or play one always has one's car beside one as a potential escape-mechanism.

Increasingly, the same considerations come into play in the urban use of cars as well, to the defeat and demoralisation of mass-transit planning and finance. Our colleague Mark Benney, questioning his fellow-clerks at the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank as to why they invariably drove downtown, with all the congestion and trouble of parking, when they could just as easily ride comfortable com-

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muter trains, discovered this same motive of the imaginary getaway. For they would answer that perhaps they might get sick, or their wives might, and they'd have to leave in a hurry. They seemed to have a sort of claustrophobia which was alleviated by having the space of one's own car around one —even in a traffic jam, in which one could sit and complain: why don't "they" do something about it?

So politically dominant is the automobile, in fact, that cities and states will tax and tear themselves apart in the effort to "do something" about traffic—but only through measures that facilitate (in effect, increase) the flow of vehicles rather than reduce it. The result of each new palliative parkway is only to relieve some roads at the expense of others, inducing more people to drive more cars in an endless vicious circle. Astonishingly, this class engineering—for the suburbs, at the expense of the urbs—is rarely protested by those whom it hurts. Aside from schools, highways are the only collective product not to be condemned as "creeping socialism," or damned by non-users (and the residual carless privileged or poor) as offering no benefit to them. We doubt if the Hindu cow is more sacred than the American car.

And the car—at the same time—is demanding, impractical, and murderous. The possibility of cancer caused by cigarette-smoking occasioned the manufacturers greater difficulty (a serious setback to their stocks) than the actual casualties of the road have caused the car companies. A recent survey showed that at least one-fifth of the American population over the age of twenty-one had been in an accident in which someone was hurt; yet unless a local outcry about this is being made in the press—or by the exceptional politician, like Governor Ribicoff of Connecticut —it is not taken very seriously. The grudging interest of manufacturers in safety devices seems intended mainly as compensatory sales-appeal to the security-minded. We should add, especially in view of the evidence that only a tiny percentage of car-owners voluntarily install seat-belts or other self-evidently desirable equipment, that we regard most discussions of auto casualties and auto safety as a kind of titillation—like horror comics, or the news stories of rail and plane accidents, or civil defence.

Saviour of the City?

No doubt many readers have been impressed, as the authors have, by the brutality and solipsism the car allows the driver. Margaret Mead, in *Male and Female*, has commented on the way in which Americans use objects to intervene in their relationships with one another—one might think of card games in this way, or cigarettes, or Christmas cards. The driver of a car is completely surrounded by a non-social object, isolated from physical contact with others and yet completely dependent on and related to them, even when he isn't playing bumper tag. The traffic is a stream in which he can immerse himself without getting wet, so to speak, retaining the right to snarl at other drivers while making the same independent decisions as to speed and direction which they in turn resent. A far cry from Thoreau, whose creative anarchism hurt no one.

A recent study of tourists on U.S. Highway 30 through Nebraska, by the anthropologist Jack Roberts and his associates, indicates that these drivers are seldom aware of the countryside through which they travel, unless it is defined as "scenic," in which case they may stop for thirty seconds or so to take it in. When they do stop, they often get out of their cars too groggy and punchdrunk to walk, having for no urgent reason driven without a break from Chicago or the West Coast; their interchange with the roadside service people—gas-station attendants, motel-keepers, etc.—is perfunctory; and back they get into their moving tube, in which they never can or do neglect a roadside sign, and receive more impressions of print than of anything else.

One might compare the driver's decision-making process with that of the airline pilot, whose complete control of his vehicle has been much differently institutionalised. It may often happen that people get on board his plane and he taxies out to the runway,

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only to decide at the last moment that the plane or the weather aren't fit to fly. If it were only his own life he would probably take chances, since he would be subject to taunts about his honour or he would think that the noise he heard wasn't really serious. But he is responsible for the property, the lives of others, and for the company's reputation. He has judicialised himself and thereby destroyed the earlier image of the pilot as a wild and erratic fellow. The auto driver, on the other hand, has had no such judicial experience; he is oblivious as an individual to the death and damage he deals out as a class and he considers traffic violations, somewhat like drinking during Prohibition, as licensed misbehaviour. He is not an institution and no judicial process has taken hold of him.

And yet this is only part of the story. There remain judicious drivers, and already scattered elements of a highway ethic are appearing in which "bad" driving incurs searing disapproval—one thinks, for example, of how the drivers of large trucks manage to deflect their potential unpopularity by showing off their skill and by observing elaborate courtesies. There is, at the same time, a camaraderie of the road in which some of the car's gloss of roving masculinity rubs off on those who service it, so that their impersonal relationship to the driver can be highly sociable and they may lavish infinite pains on polishing his windshield in spite (or perhaps because) of the fact that they are never tipped. Garage mechanics, similarly, have promoted themselves into a position of semi-legendary prestige by taking advantage of the felt need for their competence as a chance to relax and develop latent abilities as conversationalists and "characters."

The car culture, as such, can furthermore serve as an autonomous and cosmopolitan influence on the communities which it nets together. Thus merchants along a highway traversing many states may form a trade association in which their individual interests are transcended by a common one in keeping the traveller on the route as long as possible. Thus do shopping centres tend to acknowledge their higher loyalty to the highway by staying open on Sunday, in defiance of local Blue Laws. Just as petrol companies have recognised the long-term advantage of standardised facilities, to exploit the driver's longing for the familiar and predictable, thus also have the proprietors of eating and sleeping establishments progressively been compelled to upgrade provincial standards of sufficiency to the pre-set, national levels of, say, a Duncan Hines—all of which, in spite of its effect on what W. H. Auden has called our "anonymous countryside littered with heterogeneous *dreck*," cannot be considered a total loss. And, too, it is precisely when one thinks of the ribbon-like roadside slums—not only of the man-made rural ugliness but of the endless æsthetic atrocity of the cities—that the auto itself seems least anomalous. However it may offend the æsthete or functionalist, against its partially self-created landscape it looks clean and neat, a thing of beauty and even good sense.

While the auto is both a source and outlet of violence, moreover, it has simultaneously been a force for the softening of life and a reducing of violence among American adult males. Warner Bloomberg, Jr., has observed that many steel workers in Gary, Indiana, when they marry and settle down, can no longer find the time and money for hot-rodding; they have to accept a new Chevrolet or a second-hand Pontiac as a utility-wagon, since their income is going into new babies and home-equipment, and their time into do-it-yourself around the house. As a result, the car is for the factory worker what lace curtains are for his wife. Driving to and from the job in his chromed and polished divan, he is less likely than heretofore to get into brawls or spend Saturday night in a bar. The car, as it were, is a decompression chamber in which he avoids the bends and the benders in making a transition from the all-male, working-class atmosphere of the plant to the mixed-company atmosphere of the suburban home, with its middle-class leisure p. .suits of travel and gardening, and its violence piped in vicariously through television.

It is furthermore our suspicion, current appearances to the contrary, that the auto-

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mobile may eventually serve to repair some of the damage it has so far done to the patterns of American land-use. The disequilibrium it produces does have the beneficent effect of forcing choices that might otherwise be postponed, and of stimulating the rapid maturing of such initially unpromising devices as the shopping centre, the drive-in, and the motel. Some day the auto might even be the saviour of the American city, in as much as it restores to the decaying downtown centres their lost potentiality for uniqueness—in this case, the possibility of the auto's absence. The future of the city, that is, may lie in barring the car from a central core of concentrated facilities, as Paul and Percival Goodman suggested in *Communitas* (1947) and as Fort Worth, Texas, now proposes to do, so as to increase both their accessibility and their attractiveness. Ultimately the citizens of all our cities may be able to share in that most paradoxical American freedom, now known only to New Yorkers—freedom from the automobile.

LET US go back for a moment, in conclusion, to Veblen and Henry Ford. "It was not accidental," as Christy Borth of the Automobile Manufacturers' Association has said, "that most of the pioneers in this field of endeavour were from the farms and the small towns of the land. They knew, by bitter experience, the grinding drudgery and the appalling loneliness which were all too much the most characteristic attributes of rural life in America. . . ." Ford himself, in his reaction to that drudgery and loneliness, became a man obsessed by time. As a boy, he repaired watches; as an advertiser, he chased speed records with Barney Oldfield; as a billionaire, he collected the past and put it in his museum at Dearborn; and, as a manufacturer, he came to understand that cost is a function of time. So he would pace the assembly line, looking for ways to shave seconds off the productive process—indeed he was one of the first to understand that production *is* a process (as Veblen also understood) rather than merely the attempt to make things, let alone money. Yet his imagination was unequal to a world in which consumption would also be a process, the world he had himself helped create, a world which can afford to preserve under museum glass its memories of the pinched, utilitarian sparseness that Henry Ford sprang from and never quite escaped.

Today, however, the automobile is teaching its owners to consume, and its producers to produce, for a context in which the limitations of historical scarcity and meanness seem no longer to apply. The car is a kind of self-contained education in abundance. Very possibly the promises of an era of endless prosperity are spurious; we may be unjustly extrapolating from the symptoms of an artificially induced boom. It may be that Detroit is more wedded to cars than their buyers are, and will be unable to diversify successfully, despite Ford's guided missiles and GM's Frigidaires and Diesels; and it may even be that the increasing capitalisation of the industry will require new cars to come out every six months, while consumers—though willing to make extraordinary adaptations—will be unable to keep up with this. But we are already having arduous difficulties in assimilating the incipient abundance that is already upon us. If we are to prepare for the possibility that abundance may increase, we will need all the experience with the improbable, or even the impossible, that we can get. And here the lesson of the automobile is useful; for a world in which cars can be put to the plurality of purposes we put them to, is one in which our own destinies, manifest or latent, are not yet given.

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P. H. Newby

An Unrecorded Interview

"DIFFICULT to believe you. It's Mr. Somerset Maugham you've really come to interview, isn't it?" Price put another biscuit into the old man's hand and watched its rapid transference to the bitter mouth. H. M. Wright, the one-time *enfant terrible* of the literary world, who was reputed to have lain in wait for Kipling with a cudgel, now claimed to be blind. But there was no knowing how much he saw through those blue pebble lenses. He sat in the full Mediterranean sun, munching the biscuit and waiting for Price's denial.

"Aw, I think Mr. Price is genuine," said the American research student who acted as Wright's unpaid secretary.

"Then how much is he going to pay?"

The American research student looked at Price questioningly. Price switched off the miniature tape-recorder and placed the hand microphone on the table.

"I was hoping you'd grant me this interview, sir."

"You mean you don't pay *anything*?"

"If I sell the interview——"

"Don't you work for the BBC?"

"I'm just free-lance, but if the BBC like it they'll buy the interview and then of course they'd pay for your part. That's what happened with André Gide."

"Gide! Did you hear that, Mark? He's interviewed that nit Gide."

"I realise you wouldn't approve of Gide."

"I should hope you do realise."

"My object in making these interviews is to present the leading European writers of our time to——"

"I don't give a damn what your object is. You don't get a squeak out of me until I've heard the crackle of your money, so don't try switching that contraption on. I can't see but I could hear you switch it on and I'd just poke the bloody thing over the balcony with this stick. Mark, why did you let this fellow in if he's got no money?"

The American began coaxing. "Aw, come on, sir. If this interview gets broadcast it'll have a good effect on sales, maybe. It's an opportunity for you to give a message to your public, that's the way I look at it."

Wright laughed. He opened his mouth and revealed that it was full of crunched biscuit.

"Switch it on!" he roared. "I've got a message for my public. What ho, you shysters! Can you hear me? I'm sitting here in the sun and I hate you all. I particularly curse all librarians who make my books available to the general public without fee. I curse the Sunday reviewers. I curse the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *New Statesman and Nation*, the British Council, the Arts Council, and the whole nauseating pretence that calls itself cultural England. Did you get it?"

"No, sir," Price said. "I'm sorry. You took me by surprise. Would you mind saying it again?"

"They'd never be allowed to broadcast it," Wright said derisively. "There's another thing. I'll bet you wouldn't have the

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effrontery to ask anybody else for an interview without a proper financial arrangement."

THE RED tiles of the roof opposite seemed to press against the sea, though in fact it was a good mile to the harbour, and all the smells and noises that rose to this top flat, an attic almost, were of the town: the usual hot weather stench from the drains, gasoline fumes, tramcar rattle, and the near-continuous hooting of cars. Apart from the basket chairs and table the only other objects on the verandah were a number of cracked, green-glazed pots containing dead shrubs, their leaves the colour of tobacco. Ants ran over Wright's foot. From the room behind came the smell of coffee and cooked onions. On his way through Price had seen massive mahogany furniture that must have been hauled up the outside of the house on a pulley. But for the books it might have been the last refuge of a retired grocer.

"Take yourself off, young man, for all the good you'll do. Unless you've anything interesting to say. Have you ever seen a dervish?"

"A dervish?"

"There were dervishes when I was in Istanbul, in the Sultan's time, of course, dancing in an empty mosque that had once been a church. There were mosaics under the whitewash. And the Turkish delight! I would pay in gold for Turkish delight!"

"It's easy enough to get, surely?"

"Not real Turkish delight. They don't make it any more. When I was a young man we bought it in wooden boxes. It was tough —like meat! You had to chew it damn hard. Not this gelatine stuff! Real Turkish delight, it was like eating a she-goat's udder after it had been steeped in the nectar of, say, tiger-lilies. Strong! I would thank the man who obtained that kind of Turkish delight for me once more."

Price wondered if he dare switch the tape-recorder on. First of all there would be the click, then the slight hum as the spools turned. No! Wright would certainly be as good as his word and strike at it with his stick.

"If I got you some Turkish delight like that, Mr. Wright, will you give me an interview?"

"They don't make it any more, I tell you."

"I'd try."

"This stuff was in ropes. You could swing on it. If I'd been a Turk I'd have written about girls saving their virtue by escaping from high balconies on ropes of Turkish delight."

The American research student was Price's ally in this matter of a recorded interview because he planned to ask the questions himself and so go on the air. It was not the fee he was thinking of. He wanted the whole world to know that he was H. M. Wright's secretary, just as Samuel Beckett had been James Joyce's secretary. Besides, there were a number of questions he wanted to ask H. M. He had never mustered the courage to put them but a radio interview might license a certain amount of familiarity. What happened to H. M.'s first wife? Why was H. M.'s very early short story, *Footprints in Iron*, almost word for word the same as Voorburg's *Machineminder*? That sort of thing.

"Why don't you come in this time tomorrow?" he said to Price as they went down the stairs. "He might be more amenable."

"I'll get him that Turkish delight first."

"It had better be the right kind."

The bottom flight of stairs debouched into a wine shop whose walls were lined by enormous casks on trestles. A fat man in a sack apron was sweating over one of the taps, but at the sight of the two men he straightened up and invited them to take a glass.

A QUARTER of an hour later Price stepped into the radiant street and could not be sure whether he had once met a Lebanese confectioner or whether he had dreamed it. Only when he had returned to his hotel and slept for a couple of hours could he be certain. Yes, it had been on a cross-channel steamer the year before and the Lebanese—an affable little man in a Harris tweed overcoat—had said he was on his way back to Beyrout where he owned (surely Price could not have been mistaken) a Turkish delight factory. They made other delicacies,

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of course, but the output of Turkish delight was his pride. He had invited Price to call and sample it the next time he was in Beyrout. As supplied to the Sultans of Turkey since 1485.

What an interesting coincidence that it was *precisely* Turkish delight that H. M. yearned for! The question remained: what was the confectioner's name and address?

Just before seven he put in a call to London. His elder sister, Winifred, who looked after him in a flat off the King's Road, was regular in her habits and could be counted on to listen to Radio Newsreel every evening. He calculated the call would come through well before the programme was over, and in this way he could be confident of catching her. Sure enough, at 7.10, he could hear her voice pitched high, partly from anxiety and partly to be heard over Radio Newsreel which was booming away in the background.

"There is nothing at all to be anxious about, Winifred. Go to my desk, look in the top left-hand drawer, and bring down to the telephone my last year's diary which you'll find there. Last year's. No questions now!"

As Price listened to the radio commentator who was speaking from a diving contraption at the bottom of Portsmouth harbour, he followed Winifred's movements in imagination. Upstairs, along the corridor, turn right, switch on the light.

"I've got it, Edgar."

"You've been very quick. Look at the list of addresses in the back and read out the names. No, no, no, no. Isn't there a foreign name at all?"

"Only this French one."

"No, it's an Arab name. What d'you mean, French?"

"Mme Callas, 48 Rue des Martyres, Marseilles."

"Thank you, Winifred," said Price, jotting the address into his notebook, remembering that the Lebanese confectioner had not after all give him his address. Learning that Price had been bound for the south of France, the confectioner had insisted on dictating the name and address of his married sister.

Price was now sufficiently certain of his destiny to believe that not only would he trace Mme Callas once he arrived in Marseilles, but that she would immediately supply him with her brother's address and then it would be child's play to have a consignment flown over. Who knows, Mme Callas might even have a stock! What was more likely than that she acted as her brother's European agent? And it would certainly be the traditional sweetmeat H. M. yearned for, strong as a hangman's rope.

MARSEILLES was thirty miles away. No doubt he should have left early in the morning to escape the heat of the day. But he didn't. He went swimming instead, and at 3 p.m., just twenty-four hours after H. M.'s rebuff, asked the hotel to keep his room even though he would not return that night and went off in the autobus, carrying pyjamas, shaving gear, a notebook, and *The Tale of Genji* in his brief-case. He had heard there was night life in Marseilles and saw no objection to mixing pleasure with business. By six he had checked in at a modest hotel, taken a shower, and was emerging, neat and self-consciously cosmopolitan in his pearl-grey suit, still carrying the brief-case.

By the time he found the Rue des Martyres it was seven and the light was failing. On one corner was a church, on the other a tannery. The air reeked of an ammoniacal bitterness and what with the heat and the exhaustion brought on by following up so many misdirections, Price was near vomiting into the gutter. No. 48 had a gas lamp clamped to the wall. When the door was thrown open and a plump, elderly woman stood in the threshold, wiping her hands on a rag, she must have been able to see him quite clearly.

After one glance she began to scream. Her mouth opened noticeably square, and the eyes quite blossomed with terror. She threw the rag but it missed him. The door, when it slammed, set up a vibration in the pavement. There were a few people about and they looked at Price curiously but showed no disposition to interfere. Once he had recovered from the shock he wanted to run.

For that elderly woman, whether she was

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Mme Callas or not, there was no doubt that he had been a creature of horror. Never in his life had he aroused such feelings. It was as though he had developed some dreadful deformity. He paused to peer at his reflection in a window and passed a hand over his face, half expecting to feel hair, tusks, a proboscis. He could still hear the woman's scream. Perhaps he resembled somebody she knew to be dead.

He now found himself in a short, steeply-ascending street with two girls. They stood where a street light shone through the foliage of a tree, dappling them with green shadow. At his approach they stopped chattering, and the abrupt check to their conversation made him listen to his own footsteps. Would they think him horrifying too?

"Bonne nuit," he said as he passed. "Il fait chaud, n'est-ce pas?"

The girls laughed at him.

Price continued steadily up the hill. The street was short but the girls' laughter (and they went on laughing) made it long. They were beautiful. That was why he was so angry. Before speaking to them he had looked into both their faces, seen large eyes, full lips in the leafy flickering of light and shade and thought, no, they are so beautiful they will regard me as perfectly normal. They were girls of about his own age, a little older perhaps, but the play of light through the foliage put a childlike uncertainty into their faces. Even now he could scarcely realise that their sweet reply existed only in his imagination: "Bonne nuit, M'sieur. Oui, il fait chaud."

They had given out a perfume of—what could it be?—jasmine. They had so disconcerted him—or perhaps it was the effect of their laughter hard upon the woman's scream—that it was only now, minutes after the encounter, he realised they smelled of jasmine. He turned right and right again, he passed whole families sitting in near-darkness at their own front doors, he stepped over the legs of sleeping men, he made his way between the tables a café had scattered across the width of the pavement, and he turned once more into the odd little street where most of the windows were shuttered and the only sounds were the rustle of leaves, the beat of his own footsteps, and the girls' voices. They were still there, with darkness all round, talking under the street lamp.

"Bonne nuit," he said for the second time, approaching and setting his jaw.

"Good eefning," said one of the girls. Her companion walked away and Price looked after the retiring figure, her light-coloured dress catching the flare of gas and then blotching with shadow, as though he saw her going to her doom. She appeared to be caught in a whirlpool. Down she went, eddying into the darkness, and Price held his breath. The dizziness passed. He climbed into his excitement as though it were a tree.

"Good eefning," said the remaining girl in her throat, and Price could not answer. His face was stiff. Everything but this moment, H. M. Wright, the Turkish delight factory, the screaming woman, was illusion! She was a little older than he thought, perhaps twenty-four or five. Round her neck was a white, spiky necklace but it was no whiter than her teeth.

"We go to your hotel, yes?"

"To the hotel?"

"We go to your room?"

The borderline between the possible and the impossible had become indefinite, but not so indefinite that Price failed to remember the Madame who sat at the reception desk. She would miss nothing. And, of course, the place was respectable. Come to think of it, he was respectable too. No, he said, they could not go to his hotel.

"You tell me," she said, "the number of your room."

It was out of the question but he did not wish to lose her company. Would she walk up and down the street with him, talking? Or they could go to a café. He pleaded with her in English, until he realised she was not understanding.

She said either they could make for his hotel or he was to go away.

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"Why did you laugh when I spoke for the first time?"

"Go away, you understand? Or I shall call out."

THE THOUGHT of another woman screaming at him was enough to make Price turn sharply. He found a bar and drank pernod, feeling all the time that he was being followed. He became aware, fortified with the drink, that the other people in the bar were eying him curiously. The proprietor was at the far end of the counter, almost hidden by the coffee machines, whispering into the large ear of a sailor and glancing, from time to time, in Price's direction. Price left without finishing his drink. He had not eaten since noon and was feeling hungry in spite of the apprehension that now afflicted him. That little man in the porter's smock—Price was sure he had been at the end of the street where he had spoken to the girls; and now here he was, at least a mile away. Price found a small place off the Cannebière where he ate an omelette in one darkened corner. When he emerged the man in the porter's smock was throwing his cigarette end into the gutter and Price immediately made for the hotel where he sat in the bar, drinking and watching the mingling of tourists and locals. At eleven, he collected his key from the reception desk and, in turning, collided with a girl who smelled of jasmine and wore a necklace of white coral.

Price was terrified.

The impression was blurred but it was one of beauty. The sun and salt air which had bleached and scoured the necklace only tanned the skin it rested against. She was golden! He had not been aware of her colouring under the falsity of the street lamp, but now he saw that even her hair was golden. Why had she followed him? *How* had she followed him? Price hastened for the lift assuming that the operator would take him up without waiting, but Madame at the reception gave a shout and the girl, having surrendered an unusually small bag to the page-boy, stepped confidently across the hall. Clearly, they were destined to ride the lift together.

It was a small lift. The operator, the page, the girl, and Price touched one another; but no one spoke. Price thought she must have some assignation. But why, if so, out of all the hotels in Marseilles, should she have chosen this one; or why had it been chosen by whoever she was going to meet? They were even, Price and the girl, to be on the same floor, the fourth! The corridor was so narrow that Price was forced to follow the girl with her attendant and wait until the door of her particular room had been flung open and the light switched on, dreading all the time that she would turn and speak to him. For a moment they stood side by side, looking in through the doorway at a bed that seemed to stand as high as a vaulting-horse. The time had come when he was caught in the whirlpool himself, he and the golden girl! Escape was out of the question. They spun on the walls of a funnel, glimpsing the huge bed. It grew larger to receive them, it became a bouncing plain of pinkest satin. Yet at the moment Price was preparing to surrender to the inescapable it was transformed into an expanse of dark wood. The door had been closed in his face.

Once in his own room he locked the door. Any time now he expected to hear her knock. He wedged a chair under the door handle and although as a result it would now have withstood a heavy shoulder charge, he was not satisfied. He dragged the old-fashioned, marble-topped wash-stand up to the chair and so gave solidity to his fortifications. No danger threatened from the window. It was eighty feet above the street, no balcony communicated with any other window and there were shutters. He drew them and wondered whether it was safe to undress and go to bed. The situation was so ludicrous he feared he might be going out of his mind. He walked about the room, occasionally testing the strength of the barricade, listening to the muted sirens from the harbour, the striking of clocks, café music, footsteps on the cobbles, voices. For some time he dozed in an armchair. He was awakened by the thought the

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girl was in love with him. Perhaps she was lying in bed, waiting for his approach, bitterly regretting the harshness with which she had dismissed him in the street.

WHEN, FOR the second time, he was awakened, it was by hammering on the door and a voice crying, "M. Price, ouvrez, s'il vous plaît. The police are here to speak with you."

"Let them say something," Price called out suspiciously.

"OPEN IMMEDIATELY!" said a bass, official-sounding voice. "We have some enquiries to make."

Price switched on the light and saw by his watch that it was 1.30. The official was apparently beating on the door with both fists. Angry cries came from adjoining bedrooms. Madame raised her voice once more, to plead with M. Price.

"Ouvrez, je vous en prie, m'sieur. They'll break it down."

Even as she spoke the bright blade of an axe appeared in one of the panels and the sight was enough to stir even Price's anger. Who the blazes were these people to disturb him at half-past-one in the morning? Would he help them? Like hell he would! He stood watching the shattered panel poked out of the door to be replaced by a square, pale, moustachioed face which regarded him seriously over the wedged chair and wash-stand. The face was withdrawn and a hand inserted to unlock the door.

"C'est lui, sans doute," a voice was heard declaiming.

At the final test Price's barricade proved useless. Two *agents* forced the door open contemptuously and marched into the room, stamping their big boots unnecessarily as though to draw attention to their beautifully-polished leggings, grabbing Price by the arms and shaking him in their anxiety. A civilian in a brown suit, a horse-faced man who looked gravely at the chair and wash-stand (clear evidence of Price's attempt to withstand arrest) now took charge.

"Madame!" he called into the corridor, and the elderly woman who had screamed at him from the doorway of 48 Rue des Martyres now walked into the room.

"C'est le même," she said, after looking at Price carefully.

"I demand an explanation for all this." Price began shouting with anger. "This is an outrage. I tell you I'm a British citizen. My name is Edgar Price. I am here to record an interview with the writer H. M. Wright."

The horse-faced man made a note of the name.

"Breaking in this time of night! Are you Mme Callas?"

The woman was startled that Price should know her name.

"No," she said carefully, after some further conversation which Price had started in hopes of establishing his identity, "My brother in Beyrout does not make Turkish delight. He's in the automobile business."

"I tell you he claimed to be a confectioner."

"Eli is in the automobile business," said the woman calmly, and Price was then removed to the nearest *gendarmerie* for serious questioning.

ABOUT TWELVE hours later Price was released after establishing his innocence. Everyone conceded that he wore a grey suit and carried a brief-case, but it was reluctantly admitted that he could not have been the young man in a grey suit and also carrying a brief-case who had been observed leaving buildings after the commission of brutal murder. There had been a number of these murders, but the most recent was six days previous when, as Price's passport showed, he had not yet entered France. The British consul was brought in, Scotland Yard telephoned, and an enquiry was even launched at H. M. Wright. When Price heard of this last development he assumed, Turkish delight or no Turkish delight, that his chance of getting an interview had finally disappeared. But he had scarcely established himself in the Toulon hotel once more before the American research student arrived, saying that H. M. wanted to see him urgently.

"I am not very pleased," H. M. remarked, when they were all established on his balcony

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once more, drinking tea, eating biscuits, and gazing sunward, "that you mentioned my name to the police. Mr. Price."

This afternoon H. M. was wearing tennis shoes, grey slacks held up by a red and gold club tie, an open-neck shirt, and a panama. He was even sweating, the effect of the hot tea, no doubt. But for the blue glasses he might have come straight up from a hard set. At his request Price put a sugary biscuit into his hand.

"It was a pretty tough situation, sir," said Mark, the research student, a little too obviously pouring oil.

H. M. gave Price a grilling that was in many ways shrewder than the one conducted by the police. The Turkish delight *motif* interested him hugely. There was no parrying his questions and Price, to his horror, even found himself talking about the girl with the coral necklace and the barricade he had built in his bedroom.

"Of course, the girl in the hotel was *not* the same as the one in the street." H. M. allowed his head to fall back. He was looking straight into the sun. Under the cottony white hair, very thin now, the scalp glowed like a rose.

"Two entirely different people. You must have been in a hell of a state. Did you believe that Mme Callas? These Syrians are always changing their jobs. He *might* have been a confectioner when you saw him and then he went into the motor-car business. But probably he was lying. Just the sort of lie a chap in the garage business would tell on a channel steamer to an idiotically gullible Englishman. Are you a queer?"

The research student poured out some more tea, and Price said no, he wasn't a queer.

"You're a virgin," said H. M. positively. "Aren't you?"

"Mark," he went on, when Price would answer neither yes nor no to this question, "I want you to take five thousand francs out of my wallet, conduct this fantastic pansy to the most convenient brothel, see that he does it, and then bring him back here. It is quite impossible to have a sensible conversation with a virgin his age."

"Do you mean now, sir?"

"Some time today. Clear off, both of you, now. Will five thousand be enough? People have accused me of egocentricity. You'll be able to deny that now, Price. I've got a real concern for you. Never heard anything like your experience. The only man I can even *imagine* in such a situation, barricaded door and the necklace and all that, is Henry James."

"Price!" he shouted after them, as they were making their way through the mahogany furniture, "Do you like those novels of Henry James?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly what I expected," he sang out, and they saw his head relax on the pillow and the tennis shoes rise in what seemed an aerial skip of delight.

"THIS IS a *vurry* embarrassing situation," said Mark, as they sat over their wine in the ground-floor shop. "Did you really mean what you said? You really are a virgin? Well, that's just too embarrassing." He was solemn as a penguin. "H. M.'s not at all the man you could lie to."

H. M.'s diagnosis had so startled Price that it was only after he had swallowed a couple of glasses and the proprietor had sympathetically introduced himself into the party that he realised what a shock he had received. For a man as intent upon money as H. M. to hand over five thousand francs could only mean that his situation was grave. A leading European man of letters had looked into his heart and pronounced his verdict. What greater expertise could possibly be consulted? And to have the urgency of the prescription underlined with money! The proprietor listened sympathetically to Mark's explanations and said there was a good place in the next street.

"You know, I can't do this," said Price. "It's none of his business, the old lecher. One day, I mean to marry."

Mark insisted that at least they went to look at the place and Price agreed there was

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no harm in just looking. The proprietor came to the corner of the street and pointed the establishment out to them; but the door was locked, shutters were up at the windows—it was mid-afternoon—and the young men who had drunk a good quart of wine between them had to be content with banging on these shutters with their clenched fists. They walked about on the open ground in front of the harbour where houses had once stood; they talked of the raids, and Mark said he had been in the Air Force. They walked about in the sun, sweating alcohol, and the first shade they came to brought sudden sobriety.

"Here's that five thousand francs," said Mark. "I reckon it's yours to do what you like with."

"I'm going back to the flat and I'm going to hand it over to him and I'm going to say——"

"I wouldn't do that if I were you." Mark was alarmed.

"What the hell does he take me for?"

They tramped back into town. Price led the way through the wine shop and up the stairs. The familiar coffee-and-onion smell greeted them on the top floor, the rosy mahogany, the dead plants, the ants crawling over the tennis shoes.

"Who's there?" said H. M. sharply, turning his head.

"Mr. Wright!" Price was in uncertain control of his voice and it emerged in a squawk. "Here's your five thousand francs."

He folded them into H. M.'s hand.

Instead of the expected taunt, H. M. said, "Bring your apparatus, Mr. Price. I'll give you that interview."

Price stared in silence.

"I know! I know! I said I wanted to hear the crackle of your money." H. M. lifted the five thousand francs and rubbed them between his fingers. "Whore's money! Art is a matter of establishing the right conventions. Let's establish one now. This is *your money*, and you are giving it to me and I'm a whore. Sit down! Listen! Don't tell me you've left your instrument behind. It's now or never. I'll answer any questions you want to put."

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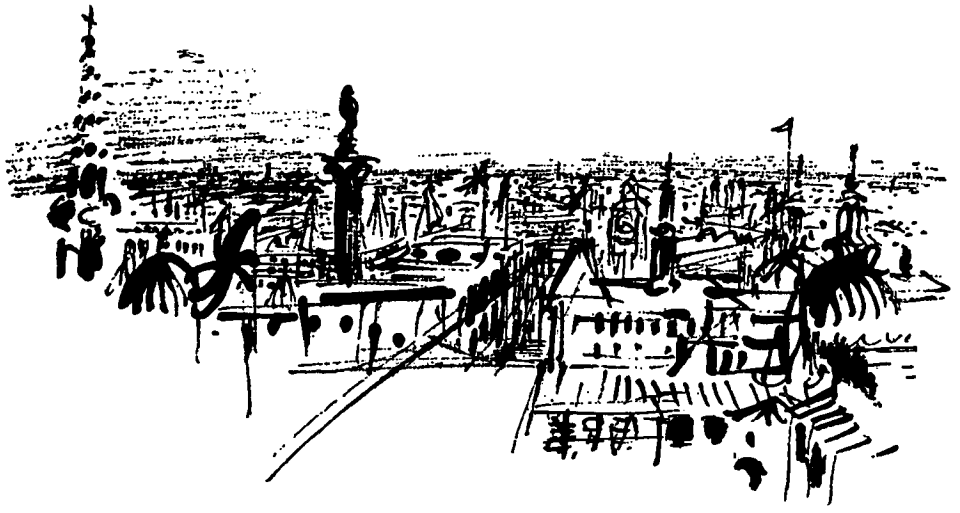

The World's Cities (IV)

William Sansom: LONDON

The Federation of Guppy-breeders' Associations is holding its annual show in the Zoo restaurant, Big Ben has been bird-proofed at a cost of several thousands of pounds, there is room for one million tons of goods in the down-river wharves . . . while in this university town uniquely without a student quarter one may pass The Human Hair Market in Gerrard Street and know that ensheeted Druids still celebrate the equinox on Primrose Hill. . . .

LONDON? . . . The old hack shrugs his battered shoulders and slopes off, across the Thames, south of the river to Bedlam. It is as good a point of departure as any, particularly since where and what it now is remains unknown to most Londoners. "For no Londoner and nobody knows London"—as every account of the place first apologises, this one too—, London is too big, too mixed, too loud, too lovable. "London is a bad habit one hates to lose." "One longs to leave, and to return." And so to Bedlam, a large and pleasant Palladian palace of Portland stone in the Lambeth Road to which the mad were transferred during the Regency and which now houses the Imperial War Museum, repository of another kind of madness.

Already two clues reveal themselves: the hack has had to travel *south* of the river, to unknown territory, which demonstrates that London is not cut in two by its river like Paris—all the important weight is on the north bank, with a thin crust of overflow clinging hard to the edge of the south, which nevertheless fans out for as many densely populated miles as would about constitute the whole of Paris; yet nobody who is anybody goes there, and it is Anybody who says so.

The other immediate clue lies in the Museum, which echoes so much of the Kaiser's War. For it was neither the Coronation of Edward VII nor the petrol engine nor August 4th, 1914 nor any one historical certitude that changed London from a city of its own fairly contemporary character to the present uncertain mixed-up mammoth — it was instead some indefinable moment during that Kaiser's War when the cost of manpower invited anybody (not Anybody) to become an officer in exclusive regiments and when the cost of everything else produced a rise in taxation and an upset in prices and budgets from which there has been no recovery. It would have happened anyway—this crash of the class system, and the first big bite into the cash that supported it. But more slowly, and with less apparent effect on the metropolis itself; materials and manners

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change more slowly than any slow economic change.

Nevertheless, beyond all else London remains a Victorian city. Its heavyweight strength is the remnant legacy of great riches accumulated from the greatest modern empire in the world. Its size and its residual wealth are its outstanding qualities. Other lauded attributes can be matched elsewhere. "No one ever knows all of London"—Romans say the same of Rome. "London can take it," implying somehow that others can't—but they did. "Cockney humour"—yet Gothenburg and Copenhagen and a dozen more ports have the same reputation. "London is cold—you can be lonelier in London than anywhere else on earth"—but the same lack of immediate hospitality is true of every capital city, it simply means that the social organisation is too complex for time to be spared, for the mind to wander off with every passing smile. "London the Scarlet Lady"—and so is Dublin to every fuddyduddy on a Wicklow Hill. All is relative. London is simply bigger than anywhere else and has more of most things, including ugliness. When the social crash came it posed as a whimper, but the bang beneath was louder than the lament of a lost lira, the roar of a dying mark. Because there was more of it.

> *. . . and on Saturday last Mr. Albert so-and-so battered his wife's and his two daughters' (aged 13 and 15) heads in with a billhook; a fortnight past Mr. Richard such-and-such walked more suavely up to the doctor's surgery window and emptied therein two barrels of his shot-gun; while Mr. Charles thus-and-thus has each third day unperturbedly watered his geraniums, and Alf ——— of Hoxton has grossed a weekly family pay packet of £45 compared with Col. Sylvester ———'s £25 in glamorous Holland Park. The giant Victoria Regia lily thrives at Kew, and three manholes blew off last night in Brixton, injuring slightly two ladies from St. Kitts carrying home bananas for the Friday fry-up. . . .*

THE foggy town that Doré engraved is still largely with us. If not in full view, it waits round every corner. The over-riding quality of the Doré landscape is brick, London brick, sooted, grey-brown brick climbing the houses like cobbles, chequering the eye quietly with a pale hatchment of mortar, never shining but when it streams with rain; ominous, solid, tired. Doré liked to rebuild in his grim steel the heights of the deep abysmal warehouse walls of city wharves, or the smoking brick of a railway viaduct through whose arches the huddled house-backs show more bricks, always more of this dull, brownish, blackened, dung-dry chequer of heavy London brick. But one does not need to seek a wharf or a viaduct. The brick is everywhere—up the sides and back of a white-plastered Regency mansion, up and down endless rows of two-storeyed terraces in the East End and three-storeyed houses in the North and South and four-storeyed mansions in the West. Round the corner from a crab-red encaustic façade a brick mews slobbers like a low brown cloud; and the same behind every brilliant frontage of rich hotel or shop; and even up the back walls of a church faced with London's finest texture, whitish Portland stone, climbs this ubiquitous umber brick.

Such dullness has its compensation. The moment snow falls, the brown blazes with rich and subtle colour against its new white frame. And whenever there is money to spend on paint, the same thing happens—given fresh white sills and pointings, the sober brick rumbles resonantly to life. London needs paint. It needs paint terribly. Secondly it needs brass. Both have become expensive. Chromium is a pale moonshine against the sunblaze of brass: painting has become too costly to be renewed frequently. This town is built for ornament, and does not get enough of it: the eye's only considerable consolation, and a brittle one, is the brighter colour of the clothes that pass.

It is absurd to insert into such a sombre heavyweight fragile textures and brittle colours. Recently the lamp-posts of much of central London have been painted a hard bright pale blue. One might suppose that this would brighten the scene: it does not: it shrieks of the fairground, it gives a seaside

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garishness to a gracious old estuary port. Go, say, to the Whitsun dray-parade in Regent's Park and note the colours of the best equipages: deep olive greens, inscrutable tans, resonant fawns, bright black and dull gold, even lavender and lilac—these are colours that, dripped with gilt and touched with a line of scarlet, better suit the London scene; quietly brilliant, never astringent. One may remember the Brighter London campaign of the late 'twenties, when whole houses were painted crimson or blue or yellow—Pimlico is a good place to see these still. It failed, of course.

> *. . . meanwhile Pewterers ply in N.1, wire-weavers work at Greenwich, and Sydenham gives us grit abaters . . . the telephone service pips up morale with Enterprise, Advance, Vigilant; plays merrie olde Englande with Acorn, Primrose, and Lord's; dials you dotty with its TID, TUD, TOT, POP . . . while firemen wearing postman-type trousers are prone to dog-bites, a peer fords the Thames-bed on foot before taking his seat at Westminster, and a feast involving a dragon is still celebrated by shivering Chinese in overcoats at Limehouse. . . .*

APART from the long-term question of decentralisation, of getting people to leave the place altogether, traffic and smoke-abatement are more than ever London's most immediate problems. Smoke means fog and fog means death—many thousands died in the unusually severe and easily repeatable fog of 1952: and traffic congestion means a living death, the awful itch of Metropolitan man not being able to get where he wants. One cannot blame the underground system, and this is still being extended. The villain is the man alone in his motor, the single figure crouched on his wheel while like a pregnant ant he drags his sac of fibre and steel all round and behind him; the curse himself, he sits there cursing. It is probably impossible to revise and broaden London's thoroughfares, to incise upon today's complexity in the Hausmann manner. The drastic way may be to forbid the privateer within an arbitrary boundary—five miles or so from the fleet pedestrian Eros. In the old horse-days each horse dropped daily about 40 lbs. of excrement on the highway: and sometimes the traffic blocks were as bad as today, with drivers slashing their long whips at each other from the boxes. It has always been a mess—but the point of saturation, the stationary point, the point where nobody will arrive anywhere is fast arriving.

Londoners curse their traffic and buy more cars, Londoners bewail the fog deaths and poke their fires. The British, who dislike regimentation and drastic curbs, are muddling through again. These people, who respond so well as soon as the words Emergency Measure inform them that a weight is born equally on all shoulders, cannot abide a new rule called out by official anticipation of a condition which they themselves anticipate. No modern city can be thought of without the smell and noise and cramping fury of the petrol engine. It was a metropolitan tragedy when this monster spitting its monoxide fumes overcame the electric brougham—a quiet, stenchless, and stately affair, ideally suited to a stale-air city. In London only a few delivery vans are electric. Rise at six in the morning and smell the air of London . . . it is pure and beautiful, no relative of the noonday stifle of gas and smoke, purer even than country air still heavy with vegetable night-scents.

ACROSS the Channel the petrol engine has ruined the boulevard café. The smell and rattle of petrol is no accompaniment to the aperitif: manure was better than this. Yet only in the past few years, with insularity weakened by war and tourism, has London begun to edge a few tables on to its pavements. The results are interesting. The narrowness of the average pavement brings exhaust fumes within a very few feet. And apart from this, the people sitting at their little tables cannot begin to enjoy one of the first simple pleasures of a terrace café, the enjoyment of watching the passers-by. At open ease in a puritan city they must sit huddled over their plates, scarcely daring to lift their eyes; for in London it is the passer-

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by who keeps a righteous eye, none too kindly, on the terrace-sitter. (One of the classic English greetings to the man sitting at leisure has always been: "Well, you seem to be making yourself comfortable!" Yet it is the same voice that is forever saying, like a fat Turk at his sweetmeats: "I think I *fancy* a *nice* . . ."). And one other elementary essential of the café has been overlooked—service by waiter. The fragile excuse is "economy": too little space, and too inconsistent a weather. But when one sees the tables set out under the trees in a park, and considers what grace and comfort is managed elsewhere, a tear may be shed for the man carrying his little orange tray piled with non-alcoholic drinks to a tin table set on trampled grass and among littered cartons.

The relative absence of terrace cafés is an important characteristic of London (and of course of other English cities). It is not the weather, nor the narrow streets, but insularity and a conservative nature which have forbidden us what is a comparatively recent continental amenity. Hundreds of miles north of London you will find people drinking in the summer sun: even in a city such as Bergen, which has an Irish rainfall, there are outdoor cafés. But the histories of earlier London "tea-gardens" have always ended in trouble—they became too rowdy, the puritan eye frowned and closed on them. Better, the English say, enclosure—and the pub.

The pub is a large and limited and esoteric consolation. Most pubs are still Victorian in feeling: the brass and glass and heavy wood engineering was built to withstand the thud and thump of big drinking, and they have lasted. To a newcomer this kind of musty mahogany pub may, with its khaki-mackintoshed clientèle, look brown and dull. But to the man with the habitude, each pub is different: and better than that—for beyond differences, each falls into type, diversity is recognisable within form, one tastes the pleasure of category, as with uniforms, as with types of face. There is the gin palace with its frosted or cut-glass mirror-walls, its high-polished mahogany, and its brass glitter; the little footman's pub,

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intimate and grain-painted to represent yellow oak, built for days of carriages and servants; the river pub with its planked walls, a nautical place; the heath and canal pubs, with their stuffed fish and vague air of rusticity; the Irish pub with its big black barrels, its shamrock tiles, its shock-haired high consumption; the wine-bar that breathes of bottling and Iberian casks; even the "nice" pub with gilded chairs, oxydised renaissance lamps, and stippled walls. And a dozen others. The collector's piece with its decorated china beer-handles, its Britannia tables and gilded glass advertisements. And now the television pub. Here the blue screen flickers at one end of the bar, and the voiceless faces turned towards it drink out of the opposite corner of their mouths; there are even pubs where the screen is enlarged, and the clientèle of the Common Man's Parliament sit silent in cinema rows in cinema dark.

> *. . . and the movements of every reported rat are plotted in a Central Operations-Room, executives taxed more highly than ever before spend more time than ever before in luxury restaurants on expense accounts, a half-asleep fieldsman at Lord's has caught a sparrow instead of the ball, while a notice on a restaurant window invites you to an English Continental Cuisine* (sic) *and in a paper to read somebody's New Long Short Novel* (sic) *. . . and at night the Guards are out, some marched to the silent City to shake a bayonet round the Bank of England, others simply to stand dressed as Chinamen or Italian peasants on the stage at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden by old royal decree. . . .*

The post-war espresso coffee machine did much to save the spirit of Italy while France sat drinking acorns in half-empty cafés. Now it has come to save England from a monopoly of cheap chain tea-shops, white-tiled and packed, and of others a little superior with carpets and mahogany and bombazined supervisors. Now at the sight of a rubber plant the non-alcoholic Londoner is getting to know that he can get a strong cup of coffee for ninepence among luxurious, if sometimes preposterous, furnishings. Imaginably unsuited to London, these espresso-bars suit it very well. They are enclosed, they do not impinge on the street. Soft music is played, the lights are low—all for ninepence. Already the early clientèle of St. Germain-des-Prés-looking youth, duffled men and their sneakered girls, is well supplemented by middle-class pinstripes and dressy-blouses sitting dazed by the low-lighted lush ornament around, by the softness of the seats. Dazed—but accepting. The atmosphere of these little coloured rooms with their lulling erotic music may at a first objective glance seem funny—but there is about them a true voluptuousness, often less Latin than Oriental. Soft cushions to caress the body! Strong coffee to stimulate the tea-soaked tissues of the British brain! The West End in the past has had its cigar divans, its sprouting of Turkish this and Moorish that. But at a price. If the establishment of a Tudor espresso at Tunbridge Wells may be thought significant, these baby Babylons have come to stay.

THESE means for refreshment are vital in a large city. Does one remember most from Venice the foot-aching promenade of churches or the cooling drink on the piazza? So far London is on its own, not good, not bad—certainly peculiar.

But now out again into the brown brick and a lighter eye on its higher lights—on what is hackneyed but what abounds, on the red buses, the rolling green of sudden trees, the white façades of stone and stucco, the shine of traffic and the yellow blare of advertisements, the red and pink geraniums of summer, the pigeons flying against a pigeon-coloured winter sky: on the priestly blue domes of the police, the square black taxi-boxes, the brown-pavemented old alleys smelling of Commissioners of Oaths and meat-fry, the four-storeyed mid-Victorian squares with their green laurels and quiet dogs, the soap-grey ashlar spire, the graceful ball-and-bobbin of a garland-white restoration chess-piece, the rain soaking everything black as an umbrella, the corner tobacco shop ragged with papers and sweets—and all the fun of the novelist's fare, Writers' Delight,

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the November smell of burning leaves in parks, the first chill smell of fog, the red-coat band in the summer park, the stucco house with its primrose door and sentinel bays, Mayfair in Spring, the japanesery of winter branches, joints roasting to salivate a Sunday morning, carnationed gentlemen sauntering St. James's, linoleumed passages smelling of Graham Greenes, Let's-all-go-down-the-Strand with a confidence trick and a solar topee, mackintoshed Mondays at the Bank. All this abounds. The place is changing fast yet slow to change. Why? Again, because there is so much of it.

And so much sentiment gathered round it, too. Dear old London! A piano sings in a Saturday night pub—where else could you get it but London Town? Stoke-on-Trent. Where else in the whole wide world our rouge-red double-deck buses? Barcelona. But sea-food? Our Soles, our Oysters? Dieppe! Limfjord! But how about our Teddy Boys—the war, you know, and all that? Stockholm has thousands, and they had no war: and how about the Bruin Boys of Boulogne? Well then—the London Bobby, the man with the helmet, the dark blue stroll! Gibraltar.

The truth is that none of these ingredients of sentimental London is unique. Only the mixture and the scale are unique and, overwhelming, can be approximated nowhere else. London is an orderly city, disordered within the apparent order: unlike a Baltic city, whose kernel is orderly and spreads outwards over everything: unlike a Mediterranean city, in appearance disorderly but regimented in private. It is against a strong background of ordered pattern that London produces its eccentricities—just as in that umber brick the wonderful tones of yellow and bistre and olive and lake will hum out of the grime at some sudden illuminative angle of the sun.

> *. . . and life goes on and a Greek Orthodox priest from the church in Pratt Street meets with momentary surprise a submarine rating wearing a similar hat, beard, and flowing dark overcoat, the L.C.C. cost of running things mounts to well over £100 million a year, there are half a dozen different kinds of cockney accent and at times plum blossom flowers in a November garden and chilled gulls from the Thames play the pigeon in midsummer parks. . . . Princess Margaret's corgi has taken the seat from the pants of an officer at St. James's Palace and the telephone book reveals not only Browns and Robinsons but such as de Ath, Smellye, Strongi'th'arm, and Sidebotham pronounced like a Foreign Legion Outpost. . . .*

THE moment when a Londoner most perceives London in essence, and not as a monumental conglomerate of subtly different atmospheres, is when he arrives at Victoria after a period abroad. Victoria—because before these air-free days Victoria was always the usual point of arrival, and Paris the usual city of comparison. Below the crenellated wooden eaves to the Victorian canopy, art-nouveau-ish letters still say: *To Paris and the Continent.* And the profuse experience of that great grey gay city and its last metal caravan of a coast-train will be uppermost in mind as the errant Londoner sits in a brown wooden carriage that glides like a canoe, and watches through his window the lithe green snakes of the Southern Electric winding in and out of the peripheric viaducts and cuttings of his home town.

Out—and he smells on the platform his London. Smoke—but not charred, a round and meaty smell. Beer? More a lack of wine-fumes and of the mascara scent of French tobacco: beer is a visionary smell, along with meat-pies and leather, kippers and coal. A whiff of hot grime from the Underground is immediately distinct from the metal tang of the Metro; and then sight takes charge with porters in silver-buttoned waistcoats, hard green paint about brick walls and a beetling of black taxis with their attendant serge policeman. The taxi may still be an old black leather box with a white enamelled number-plate—and off then among the red buses, the sharawaggi of the forecourt, the dark smooth roads with their high-kerbed pavements, the first white façades of the Grosvenor château district, yeux-de-bœuf massed with starlings like the flies on Egypt's eyes. The first plane-trees faking a dappled sunlight with their

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bark, the red coffee stall, the solidity, the kempt opulence.

How much is that air of solidity simply the security of being home? The last green ticket taken, the clothes already unpacking themselves in their locked cases? Much, perhaps. But what the returned traveller will immediately notice is that the shops and restaurants are not spilling untidily out on to the pavements, the pavements are kept for these provident well-shod people passing purposefully to and fro. Well-shod? *Uniformly* shod. Here the trousers and coats tend to match, ties and collars and neat little hats are worn. Across the Channel there was a feeling of logical makeshift—wear things out in whatever order you wish, striped trousers and brown coat; and to get about the streets, lash a box on a bicycle and fit an engine on the wheel and put your wife in the box: such a machine is serious and economical and no one laughs. But in London the makeshift is at a discount. And the women, surprisingly, seem to be as good-looking as their Parisian sisters; and quite well dressed, painted but not coquettish, phlegm-faced but neither hard nor too knowing.

Above all the traveller will be impressed with a kind of dull weight, a permanence, as though none of these buildings has stirred itself since his absence. Nor has it. When he visits his tobacconist in the morning, this two-month-old traveller will be greeted with: "Been away a bit?" London has no time to worry about people who leave it, and Londoners constantly talk of doing so.

But long before meeting his tobacconist, the traveller will have had his first attack of London Eye. This is an unnerving phenomenon. After the tolerant and objective gaze of the South, one is almost knocked down by the fierce forbidding glare of a blue British eye. It is the eye of appraisal, of the summer-up. Its motives are fear and fight. Its creed is: "Are you like me? Only if so, all right." An Italian eye would otherwise say: "*Do* you like me? Will you in any way benefit me?" There are few sights more gripping than an Englishman catching sight of a black suède shoe on the foot of one of his fellow-men. It might be a mamba, he is fascinated, dead scared and defensively affronted at the same time. (Yet the voice behind the glare, if asked the time, will be mild and considerate.) And an Englishwoman, after she has carefully looked up and down another's dress—that final glance shot by an Englishwoman up at the face! *Could* any such person truly *exist*? Unashamed nausea puckers her lips into a shocked and martial ugh. And this is a people celebrated for reticence. This is a just and tolerant people—riddled with small intolerances.

The London English are fighters, they spend most of their lives stripped for action, though a furtive grumble of disapproval takes the part of fisticuffs. And, for members of a nation that is supposed to produce more eccentrics than any other, a love of conformity is strangely highly developed. Nonconformist elements have hastened this conformity:

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we suspect anything unusual: we are much attracted by the sober path of the clan, where all views are the same, all dress similar, where the enemy is named and the parados manned, where black is black and white is white and the soul an unambiguous grey. The impulse to club up is considerable. The celebrated upper-class clubs, hallowed halls of horsehair and the snoring forties, are only at the apex of an involved hierarchy. There are clubs for everything and everybody—working men's socials, drinking men's partials, tennis clubs and squash clubs, butterfly clubs and flutterby clubs, Hispano-Suiza-owners' clubs and cheesemongers' and probably ratcatchers' associations. Within the precinct of the club you know where you are. You are entrenched among similarities. Affirmations can be exchanged without fear. However much it is true that the finest things in life are produced by the people who say "no," who are in fact original—there is no doubt that the larger human pleasure is in acquiescence, in Yes. Not only is the Englishman's home his castle. His club is his castle. His bowler hat is his castle. In the last resort he himself is his castle.

Where, apart from their homes, are "the girls in their summer dresses" going to? Where that provident man with purposeful stride, his suited look? To their clubs.

But it is in these very human acquiescent clubs that, once again, the lovely germ fecundates. For in the clubs they argue. From an entrenched safe position they burst from their dug-outs *inside* their dug-outs: heresies are applauded, wildnesses condoned: there is eruption, that ends not in a bloody head but a smile and a patted back. The man who horse-whips himself on the steps of his club is exceptional.

> *. . . and let us remember that lying on river gravels and mud massed with ancient oyster shells, the great Wen (designer, as a schoolboy has had it, of St. Paul's) is cupped by the heights of Blackheath and Highgate. Paragoned Blackheath above palatial Greenwich, Highgate where copper domes blaze above tall tudor flats, and fields of tombstones, white as lilies and the bones beneath, flow to the distance . . . somewhere in between, ships' funnels chimney the housetops among thirty-six miles of Dockland quays, and deep down among gas-pipes and electric cables and blue-tiled sewers the underground postal railway worms its private way, and above ground wind the barge-drifting rivers Lea and Roding, as does the little Wandle of Wandsworth; and along Oxford Street two amplified voices have their say—one from an Evangelist's van drawn up near the Palladium, another and a smaller from a practical-joke shop, assuring that "our tickling powders'll drive your friends crazy! Try our stinkbombs—you'll never want any other!". . .*

WHAT, if our returned traveller had been away a decade or two, would he find so different in the old town?

His eye will pick on espresso bars, blue lamp-posts, television aerials, phosphorescent advertisements, erotic and sadistic film posters of magnitude, new and brighter clothes all round, new blocks of flats and offices, strange potalas rising round St. Paul's, the East End playing a grimy game of mass balconies à la Corbusier, and everywhere more opulent and more diverse traffic with monstrous coaches like queen ants lumbering among double-headed limousine-beetles and fly-sized mica-domed single-seaters, and their attendant sodium lamps that turn the concrete way into a yellow black-lipped hell. . . . There will be so much to catch his eye that he will be in danger of forgetting how much has remained the same. Probably London is still the richest of all capital cities in pre-1914 architectures, furnishings. When we are abroad we think we see more of these, because their form is strange to us. The Londoner's own eye accepts too much as a kind of blur—the familiar merits not contempt but oblivion.

But old gold shop fascia like *Drysalters, Italian Warehouseman, Plumassier* are slowly disappearing and newfangled names take their place—even, for tobacco-and-sweets, *Smokes and Candies*. The trams are gone. Trolley-buses whoosh along like big-

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eyed glass conservatories. The advertisement hoardings are alive with ladies in underwear. A bosum-cult is plainly far advanced—we are a patriarchy being taken over by the maters, and a new kind of woman has arisen since the war, called a "housewife," something apparently quite unusual, a great demander, no *hausfrau*. Cocteau could find a Parisian simile between the movements of muffed skating cocottes and "the noble curves of the Metro entrances": patriarchal Chesterton talks of London and the wind coming round the corners like a taxi-cab: what should a modern simile be—the nose of the Duke's helicopter rising above the Palace roof, above the Changing of the Guard, like a 40-in. bust?

Probably of all things sounds have changed the most. Taxis now come along talking at the tops of their radio voices, three-wheeler milk-vans whine up like rogue vacuum cleaners, there is a high piping of electric kettles at tea-time, and power-tools of all kinds saw the ears with their high screech. The automatic drill takes stronger precedence as the roads are torn up to usher in the Season in Spring; tree-surgeons hum like giant bees in their branches; above them jet aircraft hurry like scratches across glass; air liners drone along at echoing leisure, but the hum of the street traffic is lower and softer than it was, and probably, like a quietly poisonous plant, more venomous.

On summer nights you may yet hear nightingales; and owls still hoot against the rose flush of a neon sky. Past these dark feathered vases high in the trees pump the waves of weird new wisdoms—cowboy dramas, quizzes, songs, whole orchestras, and the oddly intelligent noises of the Third Programme, strange child of an art-shy Nation. The roof of the Ritz bristles with television aerials. From the embankmented old trains of the North London railways one may see a suburban housewife mowing her lawn with what looks like a vacuum cleaner attached to the house by a long black cable. The same black snakes of cable invest the fairgrounds—the old barkers' voices are all electrified, warped like old

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vulcanite telephone voices, while the power engines throb beyond the caravans like a monstrous northern cicada-growth.

In the bus a bunch of brown fingers hands you a long wisp of thin purple-smudged paper instead of a proper coloured ticket—and you feel from these new West Indian bus-conductors a courtesy that is perhaps a relief from cockney severity, endearing when ebullient but too often simply self-righteous. Yet equally the fingers may be white, with L.T.B.-red nails—parts of a madam-conductor, highly jewelled in her broad blue slacks, herself a novelty not quite past.

Up from a hole in the road pokes the passive face of a Tamil with long black hair curling on mud-spattered shoulders—but apparently quite at home alongside his fellow labourers, red-faced white men who no longer wear caps but a clown's assortment of coloured berets and even discarded millinery to keep the dust from their short-cropped hair.

At a Piccadilly corner on a cool summer's night five people nearly bump into each other: a man with pale plastic mackintosh fitted over his hat and shoes as well as over his shoulders, a woman in a flowered dress with a tall white motor-cyclist's crash helmet tiaraed above her blue rinse, a youth wearing a velvet-touched suit of mixed Edwardian and zoot-suit cut, another strayed from Mayfair in a curled bowler and a much more carefully Edwardian compromise, a young woman wearing tartan trousers, her white face kohled as an Arab, a poodle clasped beneath her poodle-cut—these five pass each other without recognition, neither unusual nor usual, prototypes of the changing habit but still swamped by an orthodox man-in-a-suit and a uniformed woman in her cardigan and print dress. However, such an encounter may send the uncasual observer in need of quick refreshment. But his hand pauses on the glass door at the last moment. No, they are not drinking inside—but simply sitting in rows in front of what seem to be large port-holes with the ocean circling at speed within. For this is no café but a white and slightly sea-sick launderette, further evidence of economic change, a meeting place for the meek, as restfully companionable as a queue.

It is astounding to think that only thirty years ago there were no queues, apart from the Pit stands, in London. Who remembers the umbrella-battle for the bus, the Neapolitan crush at the butter counter! The war which changed so much changed this. The queue must go down as a good habit; it is courteous and fair, but at the expense of *brio*. It turns lions to sheep, and often forms a nearly narcotic addiction. The common joke is true about the voice from behind asking after ten minutes: "What are we queuing for?" It has also happened that the top of a queue has met the tail round an entire building—and for long time remained so. The queue is indicative again of the English fury for fairness; but it could also be, without stretching too far a point, that the queue is in a sense the Londoner's café terrace—for it is only in a queue, among these fairly fast-moving streets where one cannot even lounge on a corner, that man may observe anonymously and at leisure the passing of his fellow men. Though the best queue I ever saw was not so comfortable—a couple of dozen dripping umbrellas and pixie-hoods at eleven-thirty of a weekday morning in heavy rain outside a British Restaurant in Buckingham Palace Gardens, with a drenched and crippled fiddler strumming for their pleasure no less than *Land of Hope and Glory*: the smoke from Victoria Station blew across, and coach after coach full of rosetted sportsmen from the North arrived at the nearby station to swell the mighty and splendid wen.

These rosetted and paper-capped hordes swoop in for the big football matches, wander the town wonderingly and a little forlorn during the day, rouse up themselves in the pubs later and depart on still later trains, joyfully tearing these to pieces as they glide off through red-brick suburbs into the northern night. There are other intrusions of colour into the grey-brown streets — particularly during the tourist months, when Piccadilly is earnest with snapbrim stetsons, when there's a Chilean or a Tasmanian to every lamp-post,

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and one may see in a pub some perplexed gentlemen from Bordeaux watching a Britisher gulp down his nonentitous food without wincing yet insist vigorously on the finesse of the beer, choosing a mild or a bitter or a mild-and-bitter or an old-and-mild or a main line or a bitter-and-burton or any of some dozen and more bottled beers or stouts in various esoteric permutation and watching stiff as a pointer dog the pouring and head and sediment of each. And the beer-drinking Britisher is equally puzzled by the behaviour of some of his visitors. There was a rich potentate of West Africa who went specially to Savile Row and, after much deliberation, selected a nice bird's-eye worsted; when asked about a fitting he simply asked for a good length cut, wrapped it round himself in the manner of his own country, and went off plainly the more suitably dressed. Everyone is a little muddled by one another, and the gayer for it. The Londoner's idea of gaiety is too often "cheeriness" and "brightness"—negative affirmations, attitudes *against* despair—but the old town opens up easily to anything, the enormous orthodox welcomes but swallows the heterodox; there is plenty of belly to digest it.

Then there are the big fluxes among the natives themselves as different tribes of Londoner go about their mass-diversion. There are the addicts of the grit-track motorcycle night, and the dog-racers, and the palais-de-dancers, and those surprising thousands who queue at the Tate Gallery picture exhibitions and the big concerts and the ballet and theatre pits; and all those left over who pile the cinemas; or listen to the speakers in the parks; or wander up and down Oxford Street shop-wondering; or go to their clubs; or stay at home; or just stand about scribbling on lavatory walls. Whenever I think of this huge and various amount of people doing all they want and much that they don't want (for so much is full) a frightful figure slips into my mind. It concerns the gasworks at Beckton. In this one undertaking there are over seventy miles of private rail and thirty special locomotives. It serves, of course, much of industrial London, which is itself considerable. Ponderous imponderables like about 9,000,000 people and well over 720,000 square miles dwarf these Beckton figures: but that only makes them awe me the more.

> *. . . In August 1914 the proprietor of the old Prussian Eagle in Wellclose Square painted out the P, two forks are served with fish in the fry-shop at unaristocratic Peckham Rye, and a certain quietness on Thursday nights everywhere, from Poplar to Pinner, Wimbledon to Wapping, signifies that people are at their Pools. Bummarees from Smithfield and furriers of Garlick Hill are murmuring of perms and treble chances: just as the larger language of lbw and offside and nap takes precedence over smalltalk of world affairs among the citizens of a nation that managed to run its annual Derby throughout a mondial war . . . and Old Mrs. Hyneman of Forest Gate will not move from her buggy battered hovel to the bright new flats because of the stairs, and architects in savage Stepney still worry about wooden bannisters disappearing as firewood, and dear old Mrs. Smythe-Paulton of Baron's Court bells her naughty pussy against the birds and then sits down to a tasty plump plate of pigeon pie. . . .*

THE right rule for the visiting fireman would be to drive him from the first red outer suburb right across the brown centre to the last red brick on the other side: then round the circumference for a day: then back to the centre. Only thus can this city be truly begun to be realised.

Another right rule would be to show him a free-ish day. How with spending a minimum of money on the best kind of food—say, grilled herrings—he can afterwards walk from Downing Street through St. James's and Green and Hyde Parks for over five miles of green walk: or from the Temple north by a careful route of Bloomsbury and beyond to Canonbury, and almost every building on the way will be of the 18th or early 19th century. And in case he be not tired take him to the great galleries and museums all free, and the smaller free museums like Soane's and Geffrye's and all of a hundred park and street benches where he can watch the parade or

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listen to a band, and follow this up by a cheap gallery seat at Sadler's Wells or the Old Vic. Take him down East to the Mile End Road and blowsy, gaudy, Petticoat Lane and then up West on Sunday night to see the same East-Enders, rich and polished as Levantine shipowners, on the blow. Take him to a suburb or two—pounce on St. John's Wood on a sunny morning with the frogged and busbied artillery riding out past early Victorian villas the picture of lavendered innocence but once the resort of rich whores: pounce on Hampstead Garden Suburb with its miles of shopless green-edged pavements and its neat brick houses; or to towering Norwood or Dulwich low with its lake, or Dalston, E. where the sky grows wide as the houses grow shorter and the factory haze goes up to hide it; to Camberwell, S. to note how the front gardens to early Victorian terraces are long compared with those of Clerkenwell, N. where they are short, and point out how scarcely one suburb is ever quite the same, if at all the same, as its neighbour.

Open his eyes to, say, the winter's evening shop parade at Shepherds Bush with a sunset like the world's end flooding the sky and sodium lamps like yellow hell turning violet the faces of the women hurrying, their curlers under tall scarf turbans, like cold dou-dous on some mad earthquake night in Guadeloupe: or to the sheepdog trials in Hyde Park, sent silly by a stray fox-terrier and a burst of London laughter that in turn sends the pigeons up; or show him the crocus patches in the spring-green park, and then a scattering of Gold Flake and Cadbury packets and ask the difference? Or take him to Collins's at Islington, old music hall showing new nudes, their photographed birthday suits in the bar pale against the oleograph of Marie Lloyd, the gilt and the glitter and the wooden leer of frieze-lurking ionics.

Demonstrate the rise of Mantegna mountains, moonrange for the Zoo's goats, across Regent's Park; turn back to the solid cream Regency terraces that make one of the greatly conceived architectural pleasances here—and whisper that within a few hundred yards there are back streets where five still sleep in a room and the father prays for winter and cold so that the bugs will leave his children unbitten at night; off to the ghost-City at night to see the dark and thoughtful classic churches hemmed in by offices golden bright with cleaners; point out three buddhist monks yellow in a passing black cab in Knightsbridge, and a notice saying NO DOG WALKING PERMITTED and apologise that *really* we are animal lovers—why, a policeman has been seen to hold up all the Waterloo Bridge traffic to let a large house-spider cross, and people let their hamsters eat through whole terraces of neighbouring flats, and budgies are legion and always escaping and so sometimes taught to recite their addresses, and several people like to keep an alligator in the bath.

OR POINT out the quieter moments—how behind the endless brick façades there are gardens and gardens and secret gardens, all virulent with vegetable life swelling and pressing: and how on every secret lavatory wall there are written up and washed off and written up again endless obscene graffiti, suggesting a subfusc mackintoshed

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sex-frustration quite as virulent as the hidden gardens, a little of it ending in the murky London murder, still a particular tinged with Victorian fog, and some of it rousing riotous patches of cheap prostitution in the terminal railway areas or the railinged areas of unoccupied buildings.

Other quietudes must be endured to be known—seven days at a grimy lace window looking out at the coal-carts passing in the rain in a tattered brown street in Brondesbury, with only an aspidistra, linoleum, and a cold black grate for company. Or, forever unattainable dream, a day in certain mysterious walled houses at Clapham, Sydenham, Penge—pear-blossom haunts of the shuttered recluse. Or a brilliant morning of sun after rain, with the pink surface of the Mall shining, the ducks in St. James's quacking, the horse-guards bobbing like mounted tulips, a fair blue sky above and aircraft everywhere unravelling their white celestial wool? All's for the best then in the possible world of W.1—but what of ungreen Bethnal Green, of laundried Child's Hill, of even that place the tube goes to, Hainault? The truth is, the brown and the grey all respond to a blue sky and sunshine: sometimes ominously solid as in a steel engraving, but magic nevertheless. Such is the Londoner's sensibility to all his many weathers that, to hear him talk—"looks like rain," "a bit blowy," "milder this evening"—you would think he was a shepherd out on some blasted heath, perhaps herding the gees that concern half his life, rather than a denizen of the largest concentration of mud huts in the world.

And just as he loves a sight of the sun, so the first smell of fog excites the Londoner's nose. True to its type as a poison, its lesser doses seem often beneficent—hazing the trees and the lamps with a grey and lovely mist. Frost too livens the nostrils; and snow softens the grime with its sparrow-flecked ermine. And autumn winds blowing the stale breath of summer away; and the spring scents of lilac and may marvellously creeping through the petrol and the tar. Only rain, wet colourless dampening rain, brings a mackintoshed curse; but then only for a moment—there are a million gardeners in bowler hats wanly to beam approval. Keeping an assiduous garden, or watering a single window-box, or simply keeping an eye on a local tree, the Londoner seems to come out as a countryman after all: and as a puritanical tolerant, a serious joker, the man both trapped and free who wants to get the best at the same time of several worlds.

> *. . . meanwhile through three frosted feathers in the window of The Feathers, my eye sees signs of the times—a much-rubbed solicitor's long brass name, the white Roman capitals on a bank's brown plate, a high old whisky ad pearled with electric bulbs in the dusty sunshine, the sleek straight snakes of glassy neon dead as daylight—all on a summer's grey, near as a few feet, new and old, planned and unplanned, free as the car that sank away through the road on Hampstead's hill, determined as the sweet white gulls' wing line of Waterloo Bridge, private as enterprise and public as spirit . . . and vice versa . . . and who of old, enshrining Industry with Art, draped great black garlands of sculpted stone across the grave brick walls of the Power House at Lisson Grove? Who today with his beehive drive has ordained that the twin graces Ladies, Gentlemen shall disappear from the street and the signals Men, Women glare inglorious substitute? . . .*

All this—and no word of the Law Courts, the Court, the Abbey, the palaces, the theatres, the Tower, not even of St. Paul's! Not a statue mentioned! Though the pen can scarcely hold out against that bas-relief of a golfer on the outer walls of Lord's, plus-fours and cap and even garters etched in stone, the epitome of heroic middle-class Art. But these the great are the least left out. To essay London one must always face the problem of the anthologist, a caning for what is excluded. However, at least and at last, let not one most sonorous item be omitted: the mighty sewage works called Northern Outfall, where much of the many castings of a day in the lovable old anthell go, and, as sludge, are deposited fifty-five miles further on.

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Herbert Luthy

France In Person?

General de Gaulle: His Memoirs and his Myth

GENERAL de Gaulle's memoirs, the second volume of which (*L'Unité*) has been published in Paris, are among those books that must be quoted *in extenso* to make them wholly believable. If a writer maintains that the battle of Aegospotami decided the fate of the West for thousands of years, or that republican constitutions are doomed to extinction because of their lack of sex appeal, these statements remain, provided they are taken with a grain of salt, significant assertions about relations which anyway escape exhaustive definition. The case only becomes disquieting when such an assertion is developed, with relentless logic and without the customary grain of salt, through hundreds of pages to its last consequences.

Similarly, for a politician, or an ordinary mortal with political interests, to believe at certain moments that he is speaking in the name of *his* people, *his* continent, *his* class, or *his* religious community, and to allow himself to be tempted by the shimmering ambiguity of the possessive pronoun toward an imaginary seizure of power, is an everyday occurrence, and there the matter usually ends. That France, the Will of the Nation, or the Genius of the Country demands, rejects, or will never abide this or the other thing, can be heard not only at every election meeting but at every dinner-table; and that sometimes France in person should express itself through the speaker's mouth is a common trait of Gallic eloquence. So that if a man who has attained representative status through political office, distinguished achievement, or literary fame—if, indeed, a General de Gaulle, who in his country's darkest hour raised the flag of national resistance, adopts that mode of expression, the matter is too natural to cause the slightest surprise. It is only when one sees that throughout two volumes of memoirs, and not in individual passages of lyric enthusiasm but everywhere, systematically, and with the precision of an official document the words "I," "De Gaulle," "Free France," and "France" are used as wholly interchangeable synonyms, that the dark suspicion begins to rise that all this is meant literally, and is intended to express the precise, legal identity of the leader and the nation. The symbolic power of the name (which is the name of an old Parisian family of government servants but sounds like the title of a ruling dynasty: "Charles of Gaul"), the tragedy and the dark splendour of the historic hour in which that name became the symbol of the will to resistance, the strength of the myth of the victorious nation which never collapsed and never left the war—a myth which can ground itself only on the lonely "No" of this one man—all these are not elements of a proud autobiography but are offered as proofs of this identity.

On May 30th, 1943, at a moment when France seemed more disrupted than ever—

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the homeland occupied by Germany and nominally governed by Marshal Pétain, North Africa occupied by the Anglo-American forces and ruled by a "Government Council" of colonial governors faithful to Vichy, with General de Gaulle and his "Fighting France" apparently out in the cold —de Gaulle left London in order to throw himself into the confused struggle for power in Algiers. Churchill, to whom he wished to say goodbye, had left London for an "unknown destination"—a few days later it turned out that he had rushed to Algiers ahead of de Gaulle—and so he had to content himself with seeing Anthony Eden, then the Foreign Minister. "Do you know," Eden said in farewell, "that you have caused us more difficulties than all our European allies put together?" "Undoubtedly," de Gaulle answered. "France is a great power." Here is the misunderstanding in a nutshell. Eden says a word to de Gaulle, and is answered by —France in person.

That de Gaulle acted in this historical drama not as a person but as the super-personal embodiment of France he gives us to understand by the many passages in which he speaks of himself in the third person. He often made use of this impersonal form in conversation with the Allied Chiefs of State. In 1942 he said to Churchill, "You had the merit, after Vichy's armistice, of continuing to play the card of France. That card is called de Gaulle. Don't lose it now!" And so he speaks also to his contemporaries and posterity, in sometimes hymn-like sentences: "Because everyone assembled here has chosen Charles de Gaulle in his heart as the refuge of his need and the symbol of his hope, let him look toward him with trust and fraternity, and let the unity of the nation shine forth in that gaze." And that is the way he wishes us to see him.

NOTHING about this heroic poem would be comprehensible if the distinction between temporal France—the hexagon between the Pyrenees and the Rhine inhabited by Frenchmen—and the eternal France that dwells outside time and space in the heaven of Platonic ideas were not taken for granted from the very beginning. This eternal France, in its power and glory, remains untouched by the unseemly hazards to which the temporal state and its inhabitants may be exposed; but at great and solemn moments it descends into earthly history in the shape of heroes and saints. The very first sentences of de Gaulle's memoirs are dedicated to an invocation of this eternal France: "All my life I have thought of France in a certain way. This is inspired by sentiment as much as by reason. The emotional side of me tends to imagine France, like the princess in the fairy stories or the Madonna in the frescoes, as dedicated to an exalted and exceptional destiny. Instinctively I have the feeling that Providence has created her either for complete successes or for exemplary misfortunes. If, in spite of this, mediocrity shows in her acts and deeds, it strikes me as an absurd anomaly, to be imputed to the faults of Frenchmen, not to the genius of the land."

This kind of religious veneration of one's homeland can very well coincide with the deepest contempt for one's countrymen, just as the love of mankind is so often combined with contempt for men—the higher and more abstract the ideal, the less are mortals worthy of it. What is involved is a religious cult, a "national religion," whose compatibility with the General's marked Christian piety probably never struck his soldier's heart as problematic. (*"Notre-Dame la France,"* "Our Lady France," is one of his favourite stylistic embellishments—the knightly, Latin-Catholic counterpart of that bearded monstrosity who haunts the worst stretches of Teutonic literature and rhetoric.) To this is added the heroic and military conception of history entertained by the career officer from Saint-Cyr, in which only military prowess and the glory of marshals and kings have meaning, in which "the sword is the axis of the world," and in which the centuries—ten, twenty, what does it matter?—are only so many witnesses of national greatness and permanence: "this nation, from which, for fifteen centuries, no storm could snatch her sovereignty," for which "military power has been a second

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nature for fourteen centuries," of which "twenty centuries can bear witness that it was always right to believe in France." And it is all summed up in the ecstatic description of that official march through liberated Paris, from the Arc de Triomphe to Notre-Dame, in which, "with every step I took on the most famous street in the world," the statues shifted on their pedestals and the glories of the past rose out of their graves, from Genevieve and Joan of Arc to Clemenceau and Foch, to take their places in the triumphal march of their successor into the ranks of the saints and heroes of France.

There is a passage in the memoirs of General Spears, who was Churchill's personal representative to the French war cabinet during the battle of France, which recalls this historical vision of de Gaulle's. On the afternoon of June 16th, 1940, the day Reynaud's cabinet resigned and the last hope of continued French resistance collapsed, Spears sat in his hotel room in Bordeaux, angry and despairing, bewilderedly writing names in the margin of his diplomatic notes, names which came out of the distant past and seemed to prove that all this could not be true—"Bayard, Du Guesclin, d'Assas, *les trois frères* Aymon, Amadis of Gaul, heroes of Ancient France who had been my heroes too in the days of my childhood when my mother, brought up in France and dearly loving it, its history and its legends, had told me of them with all the ardour of her Irish romanticism." And how many others, French and non-French, stood just as stunned and bewildered then before the collapse of the *Grande Nation*, and conjured up the great names of her past—these or others—to prove that it was impossible. On the evening of that black day Spears ran into de Gaulle, under truly adventurous circumstances, flew him safely to London the next day, and managed, by exerting all his influence, to have de Gaulle recognised and proclaimed as the head of the French resistance. There is a profound significance in the meeting of these two men who, in a moment of shattering crisis, instinctively understood each other, only to become irreconcilable antagonists later. This is the beginning of that fairy-tale which came true because, at the right moment, two men met who believed in it—one of those "anecdotal details" which General de Gaulle, as the official historian of his own legend, never finds worthy of mention.

THIS vision of an eternal France unaffected by the vicissitudes of the historical nation goes far beyond the well-known distinction between the "*pays légal*" and the "*pays réel*" which is so current, among French right-wing circles especially, and which is a constant source of perplexity for the rest of the world. It is true that de Gaulle's contempt for *le pays légal*, "the régime," has always remained constant, and in the first sections of his memoirs he relentlessly loads on to it responsibility for all the blindness, incapacity, and immobility that led it to catastrophe. Some of the pages in which he quotes copiously from his own pre-war writings on the professional army and Panzer strategy read as if the collapse of 1940 were a purely military accident which could easily have been avoided if only he had been listened to in time. But nowhere does de Gaulle contrast the guilt of the "régime that had renounced greatness" with "the country," the "*pays réel*." It was not to a "*pays réel*" which had been betrayed by an unworthy government that de Gaulle appealed when he proclaimed over the London radio on June 19th, 1940: "Before the confusion in French souls, before the disintegration of a government which has fallen into the power of the enemy, before the impossibility of putting our institutions into operation, I, General de Gaulle, French soldier and leader, have the consciousness that I am speaking in the name of France. . . ."

Country and régime, the "*pays réel*" and the "*pays légal*," had met in resignation under Marshal Pétain's government; only he, General de Gaulle, proclaimed and embodied the principle of the eternal France beyond every visible reality of his country.

The moment of this lonely call in the wilderness was the one great and privileged moment of his life, and de Gaulle has

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remained the man of that one moment and that one act. "As the irrevocable words flew out upon their way, I felt within myself a life coming to an end—the life I had lived within the framework of a solid France and an indivisible army. . . . I was entering upon adventure, like a man thrown by fate outside all terms of reference." His memoirs emphasise this complete isolation, which is the mark both of his greatness and of the metaphysical character of his "adventure." As late as 1941, he points out, his appeal had aroused hardly an echo in the French motherland, which was hypnotised by the doctrine of the "shield" and the "sword": de Gaulle, in London, defending the country's prestige, Pétain, in Vichy, defending the country's interests. "Certainly people listened in to 'the London radio' with satisfaction. . . . But no sign led one to suppose that French people in appreciable numbers were resolved on action. The enemy, wherever he was, ran no risk in our country. As for Vichy, few were those who contested its authority. The Marshal [Pétain] himself remained very popular. . . . At bottom, the great majority wanted to believe that Pétain was playing a deep game and that, when the day came, he would take up arms again. . . ."

In the French colonial empire a few peripheral territories, linked for weal or woe with the British empire, joined the Gaullist "*dissidents*"; a few islands lost in the vast Pacific Ocean, the five French trading-posts in British India, and above all the territories of Equatorial Africa, Chad, and the Cameroons—thanks to the personal decision of the Negro Governor, Eboué, the special fears of the colonists in the former German mandate of the Cameroons and, above all, thanks to the complete economic dependence of this area on the harbours and imports of British Nigeria. Nowhere else in the empire did an echo stir. Even among the evacuated or hospitalised French troops in England "the yield was small"; only a few hundred volunteers had been assembled by the end of June. "Even in London, with few exceptions, those well-known Frenchmen who happened to be there, whether on service or by chance, did not join Free France"; the only prominent exception was Pierre Cot, who offered his services but who "was too conspicuous for that to be desirable." "Thus, among the French as within the other nations, the immense convergence of fear, self-interest, and despair caused a universal resignation in regard to France. . . . No responsible man anywhere acted as if he still believed in her independence, pride, and greatness. That she was bound henceforward to be enslaved, disgraced, and flouted was taken for granted by all who counted in the world."

OF ALL the European governments whose countries had been overrun by the armies of the Third Reich, the French alone had left the war; and a single officer "without the shadow of a force or of an organisation, with no following and no reputation in France and neither credit nor standing abroad" undertook to declare the armistice null and void, the Pétain government illegal, and France still at war and faithful to her alliances; "in short"—and this is the key sentence, which appears, with an unambiguousness perhaps attainable only in retrospect, among de Gaulle's first reflections after his entry into London on June 17th, 1940—"in short, transfer our sovereignty from disaster and from the policy of wait-and-see, over to the side of war and, one day, of victory." Not in a lonely rebellion against fate but in this almost incidentally mentioned "transfer of sovereignty" lies the magnificent originality of General de Gaulle's enterprise, as well as the source of all the misunderstandings to come; in this specifically French capacity, wholly incomprehensible to those not brought up in the tradition of French legal theory, and especially incomprehensible to Anglo-Saxon minds, to transform a metaphysical postulate into a positive claim, and deduce from it with remorseless logic every juridical consequence.

For "sovereignty" is a wholly juridical concept, the fundamental and ultimate concept from which French jurisprudence derives all public law, the powers of the state, its institutions and its authority. To make the cause of

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national honour and greatness his own, to proclaim the principle of an enduring France, untouched by the capitulation of an ephemeral government, and to summon the French to resistance, was a great and admirable undertaking; to transfer French sovereignty to himself, to accept the investiture of destiny as the head of the French state which was to be reconquered, this was a wholly different enterprise, which could only be derived from the first by a metaphysical operation. De Gaulle went from one to the other by almost imperceptible transposition of metaphor and reality.

That is why long stretches of his memoirs read like the para-logical development of a hallucination. Its content is the restoration of the temporal France out of the principle of the eternal one, which was the task entrusted to de Gaulle by Providence on June 18th, 1940. To be sure, this undertaking has acquired a clarity of outline in retrospect which it may not have had at the time and was, in any case, not public. But as his narrative proceeds, de Gaulle's terminology leaves less and less doubt as to the metaphysical origin of the sovereign power he was granted by that historic moment, and which needed no subsequent confirmation, recognition, or justification. International, and first of all Allied, recognition of de Gaulle's Committee of National Liberation? "I myself deliberately assumed the attitude of a Chief of State, ready to reach agreement with the others if they came to request it, but who had nothing to ask of them. . . . The formality of recognition no longer interested the French government. What was important to it was to be recognised by the French nation. This, however"—we are in the spring of 1944, de Gaulle is in Algiers, France is still an occupied country—"was an accomplished fact." How was this "accomplished" recognition by the nation expressed? By the resistance movement? On August 25th, the day of his entry into "my own capital," de Gaulle mapped out his route with infinite attention to protocol, going first to the Ministry of War, which he had left as an Under-Secretary more than four years before, then to the Prefecture of Police, and only then, "coming from my own house," to meet the heads of the National Resistance Council assembled at the Hotel de Ville, so that "it would be clear that the State was first of all returning quite simply to its own seat," and as the visible sign of "my will to receive no investiture of my power except that which was directly granted me by the voice of the crowds."

Was it then a plebiscitary power excluding any organised intermediary between the "leader" and the "masses"? Many passages do seem to support that conclusion: e.g. there is the mystic communion with the crowd on the Champs-Élysées, "that community which is nothing but a single thought, a single passion, a single cry, in which differences are obliterated and the individual disappears. . . . And I, in the centre of the unchaining, felt that I was fulfilling a mission which went far beyond my person, that I was serving as the instrument of fate." But to think of de Gaulle's authority as plebiscitary in nature would be to invert the rôles: the acclaim of the crowds is the consequence, not the cause, of that sovereign power which arises solely from the solitary act which destiny had chosen de Gaulle to perform on June 18th, 1940, which had no human origin, and could be ratified by no process of logical reasoning, only by an act of faith: "A call from the depths of history, and then the instinct of the country, led me to take charge of the heirless treasure, to assume French sovereignty."

Perhaps out of respectful bewilderment or embarrassment, most of the French press has chosen to applaud de Gaulle's literary achievement in his memoirs, to praise them as a masterpiece of the "grand style" and to pass discreetly over their historic and political significance. It is the same embarrassment with which they received that pronouncement, in his press conference on April 7th, 1954, in which de Gaulle compared his own authority with the lack of authority of the "so-called government" and summed up the entire content of his memoirs in three sentences: "I, I *was* France, the State, the Government. I, I spoke in the name of France. I, I *was* France's independence and

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sovereignty." And yet there was nothing surprising about this statement except its use of the imperfect tense.*

MAGNIFICENT as is the saga that is told in de Gaulle's two volumes of memoirs, it suffers from being narrated in detail—even though these details themselves are in de Gaulle's elevated style, which ignores all the anecdotal, incidental, and "human" aspects of events and finds only the official, formal, and ceremonial actions of governments and heads of states worthy of notice. There is no warmth or colour in these volumes; nowhere is there a concretely depicted scene, an incident without exemplary significance, hardly even a human face—the much-praised "portraits" are but lapidary judgments delivered from the tribunal of history, sometimes commendatory, in the style of military citations, sometimes cuttingly sarcastic, but always related to function and performance, never to the men themselves. And least of all does General de Gaulle himself bear human features. His memoirs are neither personal reminiscences nor a history of the war or the resistance movement as de Gaulle saw them, but an official history of General de Gaulle in his impersonal and superpersonal capacity as the embodiment of France itself, recorded for posterity by his devoted historian and chief of protocol, Charles de Gaulle, in order to fix with exactitude every word he spoke, every gesture he made, and every position he adopted, not on his own behalf, but in the name of France. It is this ceremonial and protocolary style that constantly reminds one of Louis XIV, with its all-overshadowing emphasis on questions of etiquette and rank, prerogatives defended or attacked, audiences sought or granted, honours given or received, the purely symbolic actions of state undertaken only for the sake of form or prestige. How minutely, for example, are the reasons explained which led General de Gaulle to depart from strict protocol occasionally, on the ground of special circumstances, or considerations of a personal nature, or the usages customary among sovereigns, and to visit Churchill, Roosevelt, or Eisenhower, even on French territory, instead of receiving them in his own residence, as befits a chief of state. Thus, for instance, when de Gaulle, after long hesitation, visited the Algiers headquarters of the Allied High Commander, General Eisenhower, on June 19th, 1943: "Deliberately, I came last and spoke first. 'I am here,' I said to Eisenhower, 'in my capacity as President of the French Government. For it is customary, during military operations, for the heads of state and government to visit in person the officer commanding the armies they have entrusted to him. If you have a request to make of me concerning the area of your responsibilities, I wish to inform you that I am disposed in advance to give you satisfaction, provided of course that that is compatible with the interests entrusted to me.' "

This lofty speech was all the more pathetic since the military operations General Eisenhower was conducting from French North Africa were planned, prepared, and carried out in complete disregard of de Gaulle's National Liberation Committee in Algiers: de Gaulle was not even informed either of the Allied landing in Sicily, which took place three weeks after his harangue to Eisenhower, or of the secret negotiations with the Badoglio government and the Italian capitulation, until the news had gone out over every radio station in the world.

How all-important this very gap between the claim and the reality made questions of external prestige and the posture of sovereignty becomes almost painfully evident at the height of events. Even the most glorious day of the war for France, the day of the Allied landing in Normandy, is overshadowed by such conflicts in de Gaulle's memory. His still unrecognised government

* Suspicious analogies to this tone come quickly to the mind. But they aim too low. There is too much of the *ancien régime*, too much distinction and distance in de Gaulle's attitude and personality to allow a comparison with any of the plebeian mass-leaders and mass-spellbinders of yesterday. It is just this combination of a purely intellectual desire to "electrify the masses" and an almost medievally monarchist point of view that is the source of the later political helplessness of de Gaulle's which is perhaps the most sympathetic trait of his personality.

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was ignored during the preparation of even this decisive operation, and all news of it was kept from Algiers. In reprisal for this exclusion, de Gaulle, on his side, suspended diplomatic relations with his Anglo-American allies. It was only at the last moment, four days before the assault, that he brought himself to accept Churchill's urgent invitation to London, but so great was his bitterness that he refused to speak over Radio London on the morning of June 6th, 1944, because it did not befit his rank to speak to Europe after the recognised heads of governments of the occupied countries and the Allied Commander in Chief, and he ordered the Free French liaison officers who were to accompany the Allied landing troops to withdraw. Again, the climax and culmination of the second volume, de Gaulle's entry into liberated Paris, is first and foremost a detailed description and explanation of the itinerary he followed in his progress through the city, in which the sequence of official buildings visited, organisations greeted, audiences granted, and hands shaken is intended to fix the hierarchic rank and structure of sovereign power. After reading these passages it is possible to believe that the appeal of June 18th, 1940, was the only spontaneous act of General de Gaulle's public life; everything else is logical deduction. In comparison with the thought devoted to the external manifestations of sovereignty, the war itself, the organisation of the resistance movement, and the fortunes of occupied France take a distinctly secondary place in these war memoirs; the Second World War is an external framework within which the decisive event, which is the re-establishment and development of French sovereignty, as assumed by de Gaulle, takes place.

THE narrowness of the point of view also limits the specifically historical interest of his memoirs. "Within the narrow and, for me, I confess, painful limitations imposed on me by a coalition in which French forces were not the principal element," de Gaulle's military talents and autocratic temperament had little scope for development, and his occasional interventions in the field of grand strategy, which were always motivated by political, not military considerations —his advocacy of a frontal assault on the European continent as early as the end of 1941, the veto, enforced by actual military obstruction, of an Allied offensive in the Balkans in 1944, in favour of the purely local landing in southern France—seem to indicate that this was just as well. But the real content of the memoirs is "the diplomatic drama by which, in a hundred separate scenes, Free France came to replace France"; and in this drama, whose first stakes were the French Empire, the enemy tirelessly fought was not the armies of the Axis, but the Allies, first the English, then Roosevelt, and with them "those Frenchmen"—apodictic definition— "who had not joined me and were *by that very fact* dependent on foreigners."

The object of this conflict is somewhat obscured by de Gaulle's terminology. Since he had "assumed France" in June, 1940, "de Gaulle" and "France" were synonyms, so that in the person of General de Gaulle it is always France herself that is humiliated, thrust from her rightful place, and excluded from great decisions concerning even her own affairs; and thus the tacit assumption is made of precisely that transfer of French sovereignty to de Gaulle which did not appear so immediately obvious to the Allies. This metaphysical substitution, thanks to which France, in the person of de Gaulle, once more stood at their sides as a great power, was not unconditionally evident to earthbound spirits. The British Government had already, on its own account and independently of any French action, proclaimed on the very day of the Franco-German armistice its intention to work for the "complete restoration of France and the French Empire"; it had, moreover, both greeted and made possible General de Gaulle's appeal, in the hope that it would provide a point around which there might crystallise the French will-to-resist that would sooner or later reawaken; and it had recognised de Gaulle as "leader of the Free French who join him"; but the thought that with this de Gaulle had become the bearer, and indeed the only bearer, of

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French sovereignty had never even occurred to it. This mystique elaborated into a juridical system could only strike it as a mystification.

This misunderstanding, which was seldom clearly formulated, breaks into the open in a dramatic clash with Churchill in September 1941—occasioned by the British occupation of Madagascar—which de Gaulle reports as follows:

". . . He cried out furiously: 'You say you are France! You are not France! I don't recognise you as France! . . . France! Where is it? Of course I admit that General de Gaulle and those who follow him are an important and considerable part of that people. But I have no doubt another authority could be found outside of them which would also have its value.'

"I cut him off. 'If, in your eyes, I am not the representative of France, why and by what right do you deal with me concerning her world interests?' "

This is the answer of a great jurist. For a year Radio London had been spreading General de Gaulle's appeal "in the name of France"; the English government had made it possible for him to accept the adhesion of Chad and the Cameroons in the name of "Free France"; it had perhaps not given this oratorical formula and this title the juridical implications which de Gaulle deduced from them, but it had been taken at its literal word. The English could still, in their practical conduct of the war, ignore this verbal logic—and this they did, at the price of seeing themselves daily accused of base plots and imperialistic intrigues against France—but they did not deny it.

THIS first misunderstanding is complicated by a second. General de Gaulle's patriotic aim was "to bring the French Empire back into the war" and at the same time, in order to prevent its dismemberment, to bring it in its entirety under the sovereignty of "Free France," that is, to oppose the creation in it of "any authority that was not mine." The misfortune was that in this enterprise he could rely neither on resources of his own nor on any effective help from within the French Empire, but only on England, and this was enough to bring all the old French naval and colonial prejudices against "perfidious Albion" into play against him. The armistice concluded by the Pétain government had kept the Empire together and out of German hands, and thus the tragic fact was that the Vichy soldiers and officials too were defending the unity and integrity of the French Empire against the attempt to "bring it back into the war" by outside interference. De Gaulle himself, on occasion, was not above appealing to this "faithfulness to the Empire" to strengthen his position *vis-à-vis* the Allies: "Even the heartrending courage displayed in the defence of one part or another of the Empire against Fighting France and against her allies by troops still misled by the lies of Vichy is proof, distorted yet unquestionable, of this determination of the French. Every attack on France's sovereignty over her Empire will arouse profound resentment in France." (Speech in Albert Hall, June 18th, 1942.)

Thus the history of the Gaullist "conquest" of the Empire—not from the enemy, who was not there, but from Vichy—is a sombre history in which, apart from the spontaneous rallying of Equatorial Africa in August 1940, there are few glorious pages. A month later, in September 1940, followed the cruel failure of the attempted coup at Dakar, which was based on the illusion that it would be enough for a Free French flotilla with de Gaulle aboard to appear before the great port in order to win its enthusiastic adhesion. Under de Gaulle's pen this painful miscalculation takes on an aspect of macabre humour: "The fog was bound to compromise our enterprise seriously. In particular, the moral effect . . . would not come into play at all, since not a thing was to be seen." A few months later de Gaulle flew "towards the complexities of the Middle East . . . with simple ideas," hoping to draw the elements of French power scattered around the Suez Canal, in Syria, Lebanon, and Jibuti, and the neutralised French squadron at Alexandria, back into the war and under the sovereignty of "Free France." "While, for tactical reasons or from

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necessity, I could consider leaving one or other of these elements outside the war for a time, while I could measure how far the temporising of the subordinates was often excusable and their obedience explicable, I was nonetheless resolved to bring them all to heel as soon as possible." But after the experience of Dakar, the English were not eager for any new complications; alone in the war against the Axis, completely occupied with the defence of their own positions in the Mediterranean, they were perfectly content with the *de facto* neutralisation of the French fleet and colonial territories. "The more necessary it seemed to me to prepare for action in the Levant, the less our allies were disposed to it." It required months of pressure and sulking before the British Government agreed to support a Gaullist attack on Syria and General Wavell in Cairo "resigned himself to do so." The result was even less gratifying than at Dakar.

". . . In Syria itself things were not turning out as we had hoped . . . the collusion between Vichy and the enemy was arousing no mass movement among the Levant troops. On the contrary, these were taking up positions along the frontier, to resist the Free French and the Allies. . . . Our first project of marching on Damascus . . . and taking advantage of the help we dreamed of finding on the spot, could not be applied as it was. The British would have to join in, and a pitched battle lay ahead."

So the lamentable Syrian campaign, fought by Frenchmen against Frenchmen, was precipitated, and the blame for its protraction naturally falls on Wavell: the British Commander-in-Chief for the Middle East "was certainly not without strategical intelligence" and in addition "wanted to satisfy us," but "absorbed as he was by the Libya operations," he politely refused "to devote more than a strict minimum of forces to the Syrian affair." Thus the English did not interfere enough in the matter, but all too soon—in de Gaulle's view—they interfered too much, "spoiled the game" and "flouted French sovereignty." To have loaded the wholly unwanted "Syrian affair" on their shoulders was perhaps not the best way to keep them out of it, and General de Gaulle's idea of using England as an auxiliary which would be sent home when the job was done was indeed too simple for the complicated Orient. The long, painful sequel to this conflict, which in the end benefited no one and left wounds which even today have not yet healed, is known; but under de Gaulle's pen the complaints about the "sacred egoism" of the Allies, about the Syrians who were "too careful . . . of juridical formalities and too sensitive to the suggestions of a punctilious nationalism," or about the "unbridled nationalism" of the Lebanese do not lack flavour.

WITH the Americans it was even worse. Since they had never broken off relations with the Pétain government and had many connections in Vichy, and since they had never committed themselves to de Gaulle in any way, his veto of every "parallel enterprise" seemed to them an unnecessary impediment. When, at the moment of America's entry into the war, a few days after Pearl Harbour, de Gaulle ordered a coup carried out against the little islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the American coast, in order to forestall an agreement between the Vichy French High Commissioner and the United States on the neutralisation of all French possessions in the Western hemisphere, and in order to demonstrate that in every matter involving French affairs America had to deal exclusively with de Gaulle, this incident, minuscule in itself but immediately puffed up into a question of principle, set the tone of malice and suspicion which was to dominate relations between America and the Gaullist movement from that time on. In the second volume of de Gaulle's memoirs Roosevelt appears as the almost demonic adversary against whom he had constantly to sustain "France's quarrel."

After all this, the decision of the Anglo-Saxon Allies to conduct their great landing operation in French North Africa without de Gaulle's knowledge or help, and their opinion

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—which was wholly borne out by the event—that they would be better received under their own flag than under his, does not seem quite so incomprehensible, blind, and wicked as it appeared at the time to the democratic conscience of the world. Even the cynical exclamation de Gaulle puts into Roosevelt's mouth—"Of course I deal with Darlan, since Darlan gives me Algiers! Tomorrow I will deal with Laval if Laval gives me Paris!"—seems less scandalous if one allows oneself for a moment to entertain the heretical thought that perhaps the Allies were not waging war to hand France and the French Empire over to General de Gaulle, but to defeat the Axis. Yet in de Gaulle's memoirs the Allied landing in North Africa, which the rest of the world considered the great turning-point of the war in the West, is entitled "Tragedy," and with this darkest moment of his career the bitter polemical undertone in his work, which does not shrink from the most unwarrantable insinuations, comes to the surface. How else explain the baseless and improbable hint that "perhaps" American intrigue lay behind the assassination of Darlan, which rid them of a no longer useful tool? Or the sharpness of hearing that detected in Churchill's voice, expressing over the telephone his consternation to de Gaulle at the suicide of the French fleet in Toulon, "an undertone of suppressed satisfaction"?

With the plunge into the confused and embittered personal power-struggle in Algiers, which was a preparation for the assumption of power in the homeland, there is a change in de Gaulle's tone, his vocabulary, and even his sentence structure; the "heroic atmosphere" of the early days becomes more oppressive, the realm of high abstractions lies behind him: "Now the goal drew nearer, but as it did, I felt that I was moving on less solid ground, that I was breathing an air less pure. Around me the interests stirred, the rivalries arose, men became more human every day." "Tragedy" is succeeded by "Comedy," "Politics," and "Diplomacy," domestic politics have begun again, even before France is liberated; we are moving on familiar ground. The new misunderstandings which arise here—above all the misunderstanding between de Gaulle and the French resistance movement, of which Henri Frenay, a man who played a leading rôle in the internal Resistance, could say, in a review of these memoirs, that "paradoxical as it may sound, the whole nature of this movement completely escaped de Gaulle"—were to find expression only in the months after the return to the homeland, with which de Gaulle's narrative provisionally ends. At the close of the second volume it really seems that "all France is Gaullist" and that de Gaulle is "France in person."

Today, twelve years later, is de Gaulle really the last and only Gaullist? At bottom he was always that. "As far as human relations are concerned," he says in one of the last sentences of his memoirs, "my fate is solitude." But his vision of "Our Lady France," the legend of his call to arms which led France to victory, his way of measuring greatness by the prestige and splendour of high actions of state, if not indeed of words, have left a profound mark on post-war France, even if perhaps no one but de Gaulle himself saw events as he sums them up in the closing sentence of his second volume—which refers back to the title of the first and announces both the title and the contents of the third:

"Little by little the *appeal* was heard. Slowly, with difficulty, *unity* was created. Now the people and the leader, each helping the other, began the stage of *salvation*."

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Dwight Macdonald / REFLECTIONS

ONE OF THE most interesting political documents in months is Professor Wolfgang Harich's "Testament of a Party Rebel," which appeared in the March 17th *Observer*. Professor Harich is thirty-six and held the Chair of Social Sciences at East Berlin University until recently, when he was given a ten-year sentence for treason. He is the leading spirit of a reformist movement among East German intellectuals. His *Testament* is a lucid and concrete exposition, but what makes it fascinating is its assumption that a Communist régime can be reformed from within, that is, by applying Marxist-Leninist principles. A few quotations will indicate its drift:

> We hold that capitalism in Western Europe is obsolescent and socialism inevitable, but we do not think its victory demands a revolution [but rather that it] will take over from capitalism in a peaceful manner. We are, moreover, of the opinion that in many countries the Communists will have no part whatever in its direction.
>
> The transition to socialism is an objective historical process; no party has a monopoly in it. We hold that in Western Germany only the Social Democratic Party can bring about socialism because the Communists have lost all influence on the West German working class. For the same reason, in Britain only the Labour Party, in Italy only the Socialist Party, can bring about socialism.... We reject, so far as Germany is concerned, the exclusive Communist claim to leadership because this conception is sectarian, unrealistic, and doomed to failure.
>
> The countries of Eastern Europe are in need of political reforms but are in their economic structure ahead of most of Western Europe. Given radical de-Stalinisation, both the U.S.S.R. and the People's Democracies will gradually influence economic developments in Western Europe by their example. Simultaneously, Western conceptions of liberal democracy will influence the East and step by step enforce a retreat from political totalitarianism....
>
> After 1945 the Soviet Union has been both a progressive and a reactionary factor in East Europe. It was progressive in ending capitalism and feudalism. But at the same time it exported a political system which had already become an impediment to further progress in the Soviet Union itself.
>
> We want to reform the party from inside. We stick to Marxism-Leninism. We reject Stalinism. This means the theory of Marxism-Leninism must be broadened by taking account of the thought of Trotsky[!], and even more of Bukharin, of Rosa Luxemburg, and, partly, Karl Kautsky[!!] ...
>
> The domination of the party members by the party apparatus must be radically broken; "democratic centralism" must be made really democratic.... Production to be replanned with a view to raising the mass standard of living (Malenkov line). No more raising of working norms.... Workers' councils on the Yugoslav model in all socialist enterprises.... Restoration of complete freedom of thought. Peace with the Church, autonomy for the universities. Total restoration of the whole of law. Abolition of the State security police and of secret trials.

I don't know which is more striking about this document, the shrewdness and boldness with which it defines the major defects of Russian-style Communism, or the naïveté and timidity it shows in tracing their causes. It reminds me, to compare small things with great, of the documents we reformers inside the American Trotskyist movement used to produce. We, too, claimed to be the true Marxists, the restorers of the genuine tradition. We, too, blamed it all on the personal derelictions of individuals (Cannon was our Stalin), a most un-Marxist procedure by the way. Even the complaints have an old familiar ring: "We tried to acquaint the party leadership with this platform but found them unapproachable.... Internal party discussion is being strangled, the Press muzzled.... In such a situation, party discipline cannot be an end in itself. We take as our model Karl Liebknecht, who in 1914 and again in 1918 violated party discipline so as to save the party." But we were no more successful than Trotsky was

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against Stalin (Trotsky, too, constantly proclaimed his loyalty to Marxism-Leninism) and for the same reasons: There is a totalitarian potential in Marx's theories and in Lenin's methods of party organisation which can always be exploited by the Stalins and Ulbrichts more effectively than the democratic side of Marxism can be used by their opponents. The distinction the Harich *Testament* makes between "progressive" collectivised economics and "reactionary" political totalitarianism, for example, is non-existent: Stalin prepared the ground for his total state in 1929–33 by collectivising agriculture (which took from the peasants their last bulwark against the centralised State—their own holdings) and by instituting the first Five Year Plan (which similarly extended political control over the workers).

All honour, then, to the Harich group for the courage with which they put forward the minimum essentials for a decent social order in East Germany. But, politically, they have still to reach the level of sophistication, bitter enlightenment but necessary, reached by Anton Ciliga (see his *The Russian Enigma*) and his fellow-prisoners in Stalin's Siberian "isolators" in the early thirties. Devoted socialists and revolutionaries, they slowly and painfully came to the conclusion that there was no contradiction, as Trotsky asserted, between economic collectivisation and political dictatorship, but . . . quite the contrary.

TO COLIN KENDALL, of Petersburg, Virginia, I am indebted for two American Dialogues. 1. A—"Have you found X's address in the files?" B—"Ŭh-huh." 2. A—"Do you have a date for lunch?" B—"Uh-húh." And to *The News of the World* for a further British Dialogue:

Mr. Parrish (defending): "What happened then?"

The girl: "I tried to push him off."

Mr. Parrish: "Did intercourse take place?"

The girl: "I don't actually know."

AFTER THE SUPERB five-volume *Poets of the English Language* which W. H. Auden edited with Norman Pearson, his new anthology, *The Faber Book of Modern American Verse* is rather of a let-down. There is an introduction in Mr. Auden's best speculative style, which is very good indeed, on the difference between English and American poetry—and on Anglo-American differences in general, his bit-champing, curvetting imagination running away with him as usual and with the usual unusual mixture of boldness and precision.* And there are some palpable hits: the almost complete omission of Carl Sandburg, our aged but not venerable Grass-Roots Bard, and the inclusion of light verse like Don Marquis' Archie the cockroach poems, Vachel Lindsay's "Factory Windows Are Always Broken," Phyllis MacGinley, and Ogden Nash, and some poems by younger writers which might be called light-heavy (or welterweight) verse: Theodore Roethke's "Academic," Winfield Townley Scott's "Mr. Whittier," Elizabeth Bishop's "Roosters," Richard Wilbur's "Potato," and Anthony Hecht's "Japan."

But I disagree with Mr. Auden's handling of the two basic anthological problems: that of "anthology pieces," important but shop-worn poems; and that of the Few or the Many. On the latter, I agree with the late F. O. Matthiessen's introduction to *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, in which he argues for including more poems by fewer poets rather than the reverse. Except for the modern old-masters (Robinson, Frost, Stevens, Pound, etc.), Mr. Auden gives two or three poems, usually, and sometimes only one, for each author. The result is confusing and superficial; one cannot get any real sense of the individual poets from such snippets; there are too many standees in the rear of the omnibus. I think it part of the anthologist's job to discriminate between the best and the next-best and fully to represent the former, omitting wholly if necessary the latter; even if his choice be wrong-headed, at least one gets some idea of the poets he *has* chosen. Mr. Auden has met the second problem for the most part by simply omitting poems that have often appeared in other anthologies. But this seems too blunt a method. The problem is most acute with Frost, our most anthologised poet. Granted that "Mending Wall," "Birches," and "After Apple Picking" have been anthologised to death, it seems to me perverse to omit such slightly shop-worn but major poems as "Home Burial," "The Death of the Hired Man," "A Servant to Servants," "Out, Out," "Acceptance," "An Old Man's Winter Night," and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (all of them, by the way, in Mr. Matthiessen's *Oxford Book*), in favour of a dozen less familiar but also less important poems.

Mr. Auden's anthology suggests some reflections on modern poetry, if the rankest of out-

* Two sentences, however, seem wrong: "America has always been a country of amateurs where the professional, that is to say, the man who claims authority as a member of an élite which knows the law in some field or other, is an object of distrust and resentment. . . . One symptom of this is that curious American phenomenon, the class in 'Creative Writing.'" I would say the contrary: that the professional, the "expert," is far more honoured in America than in England, and, as one who lately taught "Creative Writing," that such courses express a typical American itch for know-how, the idea behind them being that a professional writer helps the student rise out of amateurdom by teaching him the tricks of the trade.

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siders, the merest of amateurs, may be allowed his two cents' worth. Although the editor, in keeping with his principle of covering many poets slightly rather than a few intensively, has cast his net wide, the poets represented are almost excessively mature, at least by Keats-Shelley standards. Out of eighty-one poets represented, fifty-five are over fifty and all but nine are over forty. This seems interesting, and possibly significant. I find that my comprehension —and therefore, in my case at least, my enjoyment—of the poets diminishes with ominous regularity as I read through the volume, which is arranged chronologically. Why is recent poetry so hard to understand? (The same thing happens with me, in art: the old masters of the modern—Picasso, Klee, Matisse, Gris, etc., who correspond to Robinson, Frost, Eliot, Cummings, etc.—are easy and pleasurable, but I just don't get their successors, the abstract expressionists and now the "action painters.") It may be, of course, that I've become used to the old-modern masters and that I'm blind to the merits of the really new, the new new, so to speak, as the Impressionists, Cézanne, and Picasso were successively rejected by old fogies habituated to the old new but not to the new new. It may also be that painting and poetry since the thirties has gotten into a dead-end of solipsist incommunication. I'm willing to call it an open question, but I do insist on that much of a concession. Which, of course, I won't get—all I'll be told is that they laughed at Watt and Fulton and they sneered at Cézanne and Picasso, and where are "they" now? But perhaps cultural history doesn't repeat itself forever, perhaps the new new is not the heir of the old new but its epigone. I find it suspicious that Mr. Auden excludes poets born since 1923, pleading "exigencies of space" and nervously adding: "This does not mean, of course, that I think no one under thirty worthy of inclusion." The explanation doesn't explain, and is contradicted by the apology. He describes it as "a necessarily arbitrary line" but doesn't explain the necessity, which is odd in so articulate a critic. *Why* draw an arbitrary line? If a twenty-one-year-old poet has written good things, and such things have happened in literary history, why not include him? Could this be prudence masking itself as necessity?

I HAVE BEEN warned that writing about British humour is dangerous even for an Englishman. But I feel I must state there is at present something lacking in it, namely, humour. There are exceptions: the *Observer*'s Paul Jennings (also its self-parody contest—in general, the weeklies' readers' competitions turn up a surprising amount of humorous humour), the *Express*' Giles, the *Spectator*'s Strix (and its prophetic calendar for 1957), but not, no, not Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, nor yet again Mr. Claude Cockburn. These last two, beloved of *Punch*, illustrate what to this American observer at least appears to be the trouble: British humour has gone American. Or rather what is considered American over here—a leaning towards the crude, the overstressed, the unsubtle. This definition, in humour at least, is in fact an instance of a cultural time-lag; for these were the characteristics of American humour in the 19th (rather than the 20th) century. It was then that England had Lear, Carroll, and W. S. Gilbert, while we had backwoods grotesques like Josh Billings and Petroleum V. Nasby. With Mark Twain, a genius who was able to perform the miracle of refining, so to speak, the Petroleum tradition, American humour began to be funny. He was followed, at the turn of the century, by Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley monologues (when Henry James returned for his memorable re-examination of the American Scene, the only writer he wanted to meet was Dunne), and then by Ring Lardner, whose dead-pan, throw-it-away style marked the transition from the old exuberance to the new restraint. England held its own with Beerbohm and Saki until the twenties, but I am not aware of any first-rate British humorist since then. Their true successors are not Wodehouse, with his broad clowning and his mechanical class-humour formulæ (his dim-witted, right-ho-ing noblemen are as tiresome as Nasby's dim-witted by-gum-ing provincials) but rather the *New Yorker* wits of 1925–35: Benchley, Perelman, Ogden Nash, Thurber, White. I am assuming that restraint, subtlety, and precision are essentials in humorous writing. But even if this be not always true (uneasy memories arise of Rabelais, Aristophanes—and Shakespeare), there has certainly been a curious reversal of rôles between English and American humour in the 19th and 20th centuries.*

WHEN IT COMES to humour on the stage, the contrast is even greater. British comedians strike the cold American eye as lacking in finesse and technique, like British heavyweights. They even laugh

* It is only fair to add that the *New Yorker* humorists for years have been either dead or, except for Perelman and sometimes Nash, shadows of their former selves. Thurber in particular has shown an embarrassing vein of sentimentality, as cf. the difference between the picture of his home-town, Columbus, Ohio, in his classic, *My Life and Hard Times*, and in his recent reminiscences about Ohio State University. The cartoonists have held up better —the durable Arno, producing since 1925, Steig, Price, Darrow, the late Cobean, Addams, and the inspired Steinberg.

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at their own jokes, a *gaucherie* that would not be tolerated in Sioux City, Iowa. Compare the antics of a Gracie Fields, who got her laughs the hard way, belching, scratching herself, bellowing, and cavorting around, with the professorial dignity of an Ed Wynn; or, to take two current examples, neither of them any great shakes, compare Jack Benny's weary, low-voiced delivery with the exuberant ingenuousness of Norman Wisdom. English audiences are much readier to laugh than American ones—sometimes it almost seems pathetic, this eagerness to be amused—and there is a *gemütlich* feeling between audience and actors that is quite lacking in New York (except for Harlem, another tight little island of racial homogeneity). This is very nice and warms the heart but it is a pity there isn't more to laugh at. What gusts and gales of merriment swept the theatre all through that astonishing period piece, *Hotel Paradiso*, a 1910-style French bedroom farce of uncompromising corniness. (When Alec Guinness emerged from a chimney, in which he had tried to hide from the Jealous Husband, with his face blackened with soot, what roars of mirth—and as for the half-hour, or so it seemed, during which, owing to a chain of circumstances too complex to unravel here, he was flattened against a bedroom wall while an augur-bit, wielded from the other side by the Jealous Husband, bored into his backside ...well!) English comedies often sound as if they were being improvised on the spot, as last summer's *A Likely Tale*, a rickety "vehicle" for the considerable talents at hamming-it-up of Robert Morley and Margaret Rutherford. Their stage personalities expanded before one's eyes like fast-growing tropical plants in the warm atmosphere of affectionate enjoyment generated by the audience.

"Only one British institution could possibly appeal equally to the Queen, Dame Edith Sitwell, Prince Bernhardt, a Russian Minister of Culture, the House of Lords, and every rugger club in the land," the *Observer* has observed, apropos "The Crazy Gang," a group of five comedians that has been convulsing the British Isles for twenty-five years. Their current production, *These Foolish Kings*, I attended at the Victoria Palace in the interest of cultural research. The Crazy Gang are slapstick comedians, but not as we understand the term, not the ballet-like precision of Chaplin or Keaton or the Keystone cops, but rather just the opposite. They are so relaxed that one expects them to start a game of gin-rummy on the stage—and if they haven't, yet, it's because they haven't thought of it, yet. Theirs is the British amateur or muddling-through style at its worst. Thus the climactic, or what should have been the climactic, skit, was a burlesque Western drama which was interrupted so frequently by stooges in the audience that its form was irretrievably shattered; indeed, if they had been in the pay of a rival gang of comedians, the stooges could not have more successfully wrecked the production. The timing of these interruptions was consistently off, so that they collided violently with the onstage action, with disastrous results to both, and laughs were extorted from the nervous and bewildered audience only by the most primitive kind of shouting. There was also constant reliance on the pun (considered in America a rather *passé* form of wit) and on bathroom humour (ditto). My own view is that a chamber-pot is unfunny even when worn on the head as a Grecian helmet, nor have I ever been able to see the excretory functions as in themselves hilarious. My view is, further, that humour, like drama, is generated only by some kind of tension; and that in the case of humour, the tension comes from the unexpected violation of a form that has been established already in the audience's minds (it can be established either by the comedian or by the culture), and that if the violations are so excessive and incessant as to obscure the form, then the result is un-promising. So I found the Crazy Gang (the very name, I must confess, seems a little, shall we say, obvious) crazy enough but not very funny. However, the Queen, the rugger clubs, and Dame Edith Sitwell (who has also endorsed Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*—Dame Edith Sitwell seems to be handing out blurbs these days with the lavishness of a Manhattan traffic cop giving out parking tickets) all disagree, so The Gang must have something I've somehow missed.

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DISCUSSION

Our Hydrogen Bomb

"I could not conceivably vote for a motion which contained the words 'in the megaton range' when I have not the slightest idea what the 'megaton range' is."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*, April 3.

The latest developments about H-bombs as I write are the Bermuda Communiqué, the Prime Minister's statement in the House on April 2nd, and the White Paper on Defence.

In his statement, the Prime Minister defended the Bermuda Communiqué and enlarged upon it. He said: "I take a little pride in the fact that the communiqué was not cast in the rather high-falutin language which is sometimes thought necessary at the conclusion of such meetings. It set out in a precise form a number of specific points which had been dealt with." We are therefore entitled to examine it rigorously.

In Annexe 2, the Communiqué said: "We recognise that there is sincere concern that continued nuclear testing may increase world radiation to levels which might be harmful. Studies by independent scientific organisations confirm our belief that this will not happen so long as testing is continued with due restraint."

And again: "We declare our intention to continue to conduct nuclear tests only in such a manner as will keep world radiation from rising to more than a small fraction of the levels which might be hazardous."

The first thing to notice is the phrase: "confirm our belief." The Prime Minister and the President, therefore, believed that the H-bomb tests were harmless before they consulted the scientists at all. If this were really so, we should have to conclude that they were foolish and arrogant. If it is not so, we have to conclude that the Communiqué is careless.

The Communiqué speaks of a level of radiation in the world which "might be harmful" or "might be hazardous." The picture is of somebody doing something which is quite all right up to a well-defined point and then, click, after that the red light goes on. Now let us turn to the scientific report on which the Government has been relying. I quote from the Medical Research Council Report of last June, Cmd. 9780, at para. 127. "There .s no known threshold for the induction of gene mutations by radiation; that is to say, any additional exposure, however small, must be expected to raise the mutation rate." And again, at Annexe N: "It appears that each unit quantity of radiostrontium absorbed by the bone confers a certain probability of bone-tumour formation.... On the whole, the experiments seem in favour of a proportionality between the frequency of tumours produced in a given length of time and the amount of radioactive material in the body even at low dose levels."

There is a clear contradiction between the Communiqué and the Report. Either, therefore, the Report is superseded (and we are entitled to know what by) or else the Communiqué, the basic policy document in this terrible matter, is once again careless.

In his speech on April 2nd the Prime Minister did in fact avoid these words, *harmful* and *hazardous*, and dwelt instead on the words *insignificant* and *negligible*. "The contribution to the external radiation hazard from bomb tests is very small, almost negligible." And, making a rather different point: "So far as our own tests are concerned... there will be no perceptible radiation outside the test area. This is my answer. I am satisfied from the medical and biological point of view that the radiation effects of this explosion" (read *these explosions*) "will be insignificant."

He did not say how much extra radiation would be inflicted on the world as a result of our tests, but invited us to accept his assurance that it will be negligible. But *negligible* is a subjective word; what A neglects, B may wish to pay attention to. An invitation to neglect an unknown quantity cannot be reasonably accepted and should not be pressingly extended, especially during the defence of a careless document.

To turn now to those passages in his speech where the Prime Minister justified the abandoning of the search for a way to stop all tests in the world. It is now for the first time thought possible to explode a bomb (of unspecified size) in such a way that the explosion would not be perceptible to measuring instruments thousands of miles away. The Russians might agree to suspend tests, and then go ahead without our knowing. Now big nuclear explosions can be detected in two ways; by the shock wave in the air and the earth, and by the increase in radioactive matter falling from the stratosphere. If the shock wave is imperceptible, the explosion is not

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the very biggest sort. However, it may still be pretty big, and we cannot leave it at that. When we turn to the other means of detection, by fall-out, we find that the Prime Minister was unclear. We cannot complain of this, because there are defence secrets involved, and as long as there is defence, there will be secrets. But what we must do is form the best judgment we can on the facts before us. The Prime Minister spoke at some length, and informed comment has elucidated what he said, about clean and dirty bombs. The point, simplified, is that if we detect a Russian test giving little fall-out it may be either a small dirty bomb or a large clean one, and that a large clean one can very easily be converted into a large dirty one. This is of great strategic interest, but as far as genetic and strontium damage go, what matters is the amount of toxic fall-out, not its origin.

Radioactive matter is falling continuously from the tests which have already taken place. The fact that an explosion might now take place the fall-out from which would not be detectable might be due (1) to its giving an amount of fall-out so small that it would not have been detectable at any time in the last ten years, or (2) to the fall-out from former explosions now being so large that an amount of fall-out from a new explosion which would formerly have been detectable would now be lost in the general level. We do not at present know which of these two is the case. If the Prime Minister is telling us that bombs can now be tested whose fall-out would never have been detectable, we need not worry very much, nor need we base our political approach on the immediate need to prohibit such tests. If on the other hand he is telling us that an amount of a fall-out which would formerly have been detectable would now no longer be so because of the increased level of fall-out which is left over from earlier tests, and if he bases his political approach on the impossibility of detecting such amounts, then the matter is very different, and very grave. If this were really so, he would be justifying the continuation of the tests by their occurrence. Why can't we stop? Because we've started. The tests would become self-justifying, in other words an end in themselves, which is absurd.

But he has not done this, he has only said we are going on because it would no longer be possible, for a reason he does not reveal, to know whether Russia were observing an agreement to stop. Of the two possible reasons which occur to an uninitiated layman, one, I have tried to show, is irrelevant, and the other is absurd. There may be a third; we must hope that there is, and that it is good. And that it will be told to us.

Our hydrogen bomb test is only one episode in a story which is continuously developing in the same direction. The American got the A-bomb; then the Russians did; then we did. The Americans got the H-bomb; then the Russians did; now we have. The French say they will have the A-bomb by 1960. The Swedes are debating whether to go for it. The Italians might get it, so might the West Germans. It is not too remote a possibility that the Chinese, East Germans, Poles, Argentinians, Belgians, might get it. Why all the fuss now?

It was perhaps something like this thought which caused the Prime Minister to say: "The Russians—and those in this House who appear to constitute themselves as their protagonists—produce an offer of abolition of all tests, if we will abandon ours. There is something really rather hypocritical about the fervour with which this last-minute conversion is reached. I have not seen many protests at the great Siberian explosions all this time, and it is strange that the great agitation for the abolition of tests should come just at the moment when the work of many years of British scientists is reaching fruition."

One can leave aside the sneer in the first sentence—the whole point about hydrogen bombs is that we must forget how to be the protagonists of any country, ours or another, and learn how to get rid of the things for the sake of all mankind—and go on to the rest. This passage seems to imply that it is bad luck on the British scientists, unfair, that people want to stop the tests just at the moment when everything is ready. This is another example of the argument that we can't stop because we've started, of self-justification. As to the "last-minute conversion," I should like to be personal for a moment, because I dare say a lot of people who are now "agitating" are doing so for the same reasons as me. I did not protest about anything the Americans or Russians did because I have no access to the American or Russian press. Protests in the British press about American or Russian actions are ineffective. I did not protest against our developing and testing the A-bomb ourselves, or against our developing the H-bomb, because the Medical Research Council Report was not then published. I did not then know the facts. I do now, and so does everyone else. It is new facts which have caused the agitation, not a "hypocritical" or "strange" "conversion."

There is an honest agitation, and an informed one. But we must now admit that it is failing. It seems that our bombs will be tested, and the White Paper on Defence, in what is called the biggest switch of defence policy ever to be made in peacetime, places all our reliance on nuclear weapons. Let us stand back and look at the consequences of this. The American, Russian, and British Governments are knowingly causing a small number of human beings to die of bone cancer, to be born blind, or deformed, or idiots, or dead, and to be sterile or sickly. That the Russian Government is doing this need not surprise us; it does worse. That the British and American Governments are doing it may surprise us or not, but it must interest us, because they are elected governments and they are doing it in our name. This is our will. We have elected these men to exercise their judgment for our good, some of us have exercised our right to urge them after their election not to do this thing, and they are still doing it. The processes of Anglo-Saxon democracy are exhausted, and America and Britain are taking innocent life. They are taking it in defence of the free world against possible communist aggression. But when we say "free world" and "democracy," or indeed "our way of life" or even just "us," we have in mind a number of rules, customs, statements, institutions, sanctions, call them what you will, in terms of which we live.

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And one of these is: *a government does not knowingly take innocent life in time of peace*. This is no longer true. Our two governments, the forms of which we have devised and defended with the ingenuity of our spirits through centuries, are now knowingly taking innocent life. But this free world to defend which they take innocent life is a world where innocent life is not taken. It is thus no longer the same world. The mode of defence erodes and invalidates that which is to be defended.

This is to put it in verbal and logical terms. But, like all verbal truths, it has its counterpart in day-to-day political emotions. Everybody now who hears the doctor say he is dying of bone cancer, every couple who have a child deformed or idiot by a genetic cause, every barren couple, will ask themselves: is this unavoidable, or is it the fault of these three governments? Nobody will be able to answer their question. If they have wide knowledge and a balanced temperament, they will feel nothing worse than doubt. If they have not, as few of them will, every fortuitous resentment and disquiet will settle on what they regard as the cause of their misery. It may be "them," the Government, or it may be society in general. In either case the civil bonds will loosen, the natural authority which springs from consent will be laid waste at its source, and every invalid—for there is hardly a disease with no genetic element in its causation—and every friend and relative of every invalid, will become in some sort the enemy of society. That the number of people whose affliction is *really* due to bomb tests will be very small indeed compared with those whose affliction is due to other causes makes no difference, because nobody will know whether he falls in the minority or the majority. It takes no great pessimism about human nature to believe that most people will seize with irrational conviction on the more immediate, more tangible origin for their misery, the one which can be hated and despised.

There are several political initiatives which might control the nuclear arms race, and the question which is the best is one that changes from day to day with the changing political situation. One of them has just been adopted as Labour policy. But now, as we stand ready to join America and Russia in the ability to annihilate civilisation, the initiative itself is ours. Never before has it been so clearly ours, and never again will it be. Those who care for our country's good name should consider these two flat statements, one of which is going to be made in the future.

1. America was first in the nuclear arms race, Russia was second, Britain was third, France was fourth.

2. It was a British initiative which put an end to the nuclear arms race.

Which is it to be?

WAYLAND YOUNG

London, W.2

[*Mr. Wayland Young is the author of the article on "Mutation Morality" in our February issue. Correspondence on that article is being held over until next month.*]

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COMMENT

"SCARLET EMINENCE"

MAY I have a little space to point out that Mr. Burns Singer in his autobiographical note on page 88 of your March issue is misleading in his reference to my attitude to the Soviet action in Hungary and the British Communist Party? The immediate effect of that on me is that I have rejoined the Communist Party. Whatever the truth is about the Stalinist régime and the Hungarian business, I feel, to adopt *Pravda*'s phrase, that "to compare these 'mistakes' with the subversive activities of the imperialists (the death-roll in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, etc.; the huge amount of preventible death, disease, and hardship in capitalist countries) is a monstrous and revolting blasphemy." Although, as Mr. Burns Singer says, I signed the *New Statesman* letter, I never had any intention of throwing out the Marxist baby with the humanitarian bath-water. But I would not have signed it if I had been a member of the C.P.

Mr. Burns Singer is wrong, too, in describing my poem, "The Watergaw," as "his elegy for his first wife." So far as I know, none of my wives has died yet. Again (*vide* p. 53), I do not see anything "promiscuous" or incompatible in simultaneously espousing Scottish Nationalism and International Communism, or even (provided my reason for it is elicited by the dialectics of a changing situation) Social Credit.

HUGH MACDIARMID

Biggar, Lanarkshire

"WHY IS GAMBLING"

MR. MAUDE'S article on gambling in the April issue of ENCOUNTER makes sad reading like all things written from the outside. I have searched in vain for one single line which would indicate that Mr. Maude has an inkling of *the* secret of real gambling. I was expecting to come across this indication in the passage in which he says that gambling provides for some men "a sensation almost sexual." But—alas!—Mr. Maude branched off into one of Freud's drabber theories.

The truth of the matter is this: A real gambler knows of the iron immutability of the mathematical law of probability. He also takes note of the seemingly haphazard character of chance in the short run. He is also aware of the peculiar psychological phenomenon that, to a very slight extent, the chance may be forced by his will. But what fascinates him is something that overrides all these mechanical aspects. It is the awareness of a personal relationship between himself and the "thing" behind, beyond, or within the physical conveyor of fortune, say, the roulette wheel. He senses that the sequence of numbers unfolds a unique story of a personal "affair" with a being which responds to his challenge in the same way as a woman responds to an amorous approach. This response may range from polite indifference via a mild flirt to a violent love affair. There are, he knows, bouts of jealousy, there are estrangements, reunions, and reconciliations. But always it is a personal relationship between the gambler and the non-human female whom outsiders like Mr. Maude misname "chance." It is also a unique relationship between every single gambler and the female elf. The loneliness of the gambler is a terrible thing.

It is this discernment of a personal being, possessed of a will of her own, as incalculable and as capricious as that of a woman, but obeying the same emotional laws, that makes the fascination of gambling so powerful and so dangerous. Pushkin knew all about it and told the story in his *Queen of Spades*.

The danger—and the sin—come in because in the process of gambling a man establishes an intimate relationship with a being not belonging to his ontological order. It is, in fact, amorous traffic with a succubus. The traditional hostility of the Church to gambling may well be founded in the recognition of this terrible danger to a man's soul and not in the facile and superficial objection to "trying to gain something for nothing."

VICTOR S. FRANK

London, S.W.5

"THE FUSS ABOUT EGGHEADS"

I AM reluctant to criticise Professor Lipset's "The Truth About Eggheads" (April) because it performs an invaluable service; it helps to correct the distorted view Europeans have of American intellectual life.

And let there be no mistake: Europeans, and particularly well-educated Englishmen and Frenchmen, do have a distorted view. The educated European may have learned his Aristophanes from an American "crib," his modern European history from William Langer, his economics from Paul Samuelson and Alvin Hansen, or his chemistry from Linus Pauling. His favourite diplomatic writer may be George Kennan or Louis Halle; his favourite literary critics Lionel Trilling and Edmund Wilson. For his theatre he turns to the commentaries of Eric Bentley, and the plays of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, or Eugene O'Neill. And Ernest Heming-

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way, William Faulkner, or Ezra Pound are likely to be favoured authors. If this educated European is unusually unprovincial, he may even read occasional issues of *The Reporter*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, etc.

Despite all this, however, he blithely (and ignorantly) equates "the American Way of Life" with Coca Cola and Elvis Presley—and thinks he has exhausted the subject. He doesn't bother to associate with it the books he reads, the plays he attends, or the symphonic LP's he listens to.

One hopes that Professor Lipset's article, in contending that the "plight of the intellectual in America" is largely self-imagined, will correct some of the distortion.

But there are grounds for criticising the article—and important reasons for doing so. Although Americans may highly rate judges, professors, political leaders, and others who may have some claim to be considered "intellectuals," the fact remains that a young man contemplating either an academic, literary, artistic, or political career must face serious resistance from his parents and friends. He will have to explain to their satisfaction that "the job pays." While it is true that a Chief Justice or a famous professor may be considered "successful" in America, the man or woman just entering an intellectual occupation or only moderately successful is accused of fleeing from "the real world." He or she must bear the taunt: "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?"

For the Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate, an academic or civil service career is a "live option"—to borrow William James's phrase. It is much less so for American undergraduates; the environmental pressure to pursue a lucrative business or professional (medicine, engineering, or law) career is too great. Only the intellectual who manages to make his interest in ideas pay—either by winning a TV jackpot or by selling a book or play to Hollywood—can avoid having to apologise for it.

Why go to the trouble of correcting Professor Lipset? Of demonstrating that the picture in America isn't entirely self-imagined? There is a real need in the United States for a concerted effort to educate the people away from their distrust and under-evaluation of intellectuals. As long as political candidates (and I know several in my own state of Pennsylvania) have to hush up the fact that they went to Harvard or Yale, as long as the President's Cabinet consists of retired businessmen, as long as baby-kissers and Rotary Club presidents outnumber the intellectuals in the Congress, there remains a job to be done. Optimistic articles like Professor Lipset's, while correcting misconceptions, tend to breed apathy. Conditions don't warrant apathy.

DAN LEVITT

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Oxford

"PRINCES AND POWERS"

I AGREE that the spirit of opposition to colonialism, as Mr. J. O'Neil Lewis points out, is difficult to extinguish when it is no longer needed. So I should like to bring up one or two extra buckets.

The real keys to empire were certain inventions like the breech-loading rifle, the steamship, electric telegraph, and medical prophylaxis. All these inventions were made in countries lying between latitudes 40° and 60° north. The invincible power conferred by such inventions enabled a relatively small number of men to (a) inflict misery upon the proletariat at home, and (b) to expand imperially overseas. With the passing of years, however, a national conscience has worked to abate both (a) and (b). Mr. Lewis's "colonial intellectual" ought to reflect that had those inventions been made in other regions the boot would certainly be on the other foot. Undoubtedly the tropical powers would have spread their domination over the rest of the world, and Mr. Lewis and I would, with luck, be nearing our independence in 1957.

Colonialism put practically the whole of the world's natural resources at the disposal of the world's leading inventors. What sort of material progress would have been possible otherwise? Today, for example, when President Nasser denounces imperialists he is wearing clothes made of imperialist cloth, speaking through an imperialist microphone, and he afterwards drives off in an imperialist car to presumably imperialist domestic surroundings. Without these amenities, and a thousand more from the same denounced source, life in all colonised territories would be at a lower standard than it is.

My purpose is not to whitewash the past but to help achieve a balanced attitude towards the present and future. I suggest that the colonial intellectual should ask himself two honest questions. (1) If he had had the power two hundred years ago would he not have done precisely the same thing in reverse? ("There, but for the grace of God, go I.") (2) Is he at the moment making fair allowance for what he has gained as well as what he has *lost*?

W. L. RICKETTS

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BOOKS

A GREAT AUSTRIAN NOVELIST

THE scarcity of German novels, realistic novels especially, that can bear comparison with the English, French, and Russian masterpieces is as notorious as the scarcity of great German comedies. Only recently the matter was raised again by Professor Roy Pascal;* and the distinguished Swiss critic Max Rychner† has answered, and partly confirmed, Professor Pascal's complaint. As long ago as 1778, Herr Rychner recalls, Goethe's friend J. H. Merck wrote a treatise on "The Lack of the Epic Spirit in Germany." Like Professor Pascal, Merck was most scathing about the incapacity of German writers to get to grips with external reality; and this before the metaphysicians and æstheticians of the Romantic movement had turned solipsism into an all-embracing system.

Neither Herr Rychner nor Professor Pascal mentions a living Austrian novelist who has all the qualities of whose lack they complain, and a great many more besides. Heimito von Doderer has that "passion for human beings"—rather than for ideas invested with a basic minimum of flesh and blood—which Herr Rychner demands; and the "vividness," "liveliness," "adventurousness," and profusion of incident on which Professor Pascal insists. His grasp of large, small, and minute realities is equally firm. His mind is not only deep, but wide as well. He has "world enough"—and time.

If so many good German novelists strike the foreign reader as provincial, it is not because they lived in the provinces or wrote about them; nor even because the German-speaking countries had no capital worthy of the name. There was always Vienna; but not a single great novel dedicated to her *genius loci* throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. What was lacking was a writer with the capacity to transform his particular province, or capital, into the centre of the world. Heimito von Doderer's novels celebrate Vienna as she was never celebrated in the days of her imperial glory; yet not so much by showing her to have been the geographical, cultural, and political centre of Europe at a particular time, the 1920's, as by making her the setting of a "world theatre," a stage on which universal passions and obsessions are acted out.

HEIMITO VON DODERER was born at Weidlingau, in Lower Austria, in 1896. He spent his youth in Vienna. "At the age of 19 he wore what has long been a historical costume, with its gay colours, red and blue: the uniform of an Imperial Austrian officer of the Dragoons. At 23 he was a lumberjack deep in the virgin forest of Siberia; at 24 a printer; at 25 he wandered through the Kirghiz Steppes on foot; still in the same year he became a student of history in Vienna. At 29 he had put this, too, behind him, as well as the publication of his first books."* These first books were a collection of poems, *Gassen und Landschaft*, and a short novel, *Die Bresche*. Two other books followed in 1930; but it was not till 1938, with the publication of his novel *Ein Mord den Jeder Begeht*, that Doderer became widely known. His next novel, *Ein Umweg* (1940), is set in 17th-century Austria, but it is as much a pyschological novel as the other.

During the last war Doderer served in the German Air Force, once again on the Russian front and in several other countries. Since his return he has lived in Vienna and devoted himself to writing. "Already he had made what has

* *The German Novel*. By ROY PASCAL. Manchester University Press. 30s.

† *Vom Deutschen Roman*. By MAX RYCHNER. *Merkur*, No. 106, December 1956.

* From the autobiographical sketch appended to Doderer's story *Das Letzte Abenteuer*. Stuttgart: Reclam. 1953.

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remained his most important discovery, bearing both on the mechanics of the mind and on outward events: that of the indirect way; that of making thought conform tc life, as opposed to the attempts, made all around him incessantly, to make life conform to thought; attempts that inevitably led to dogmatism, to reformism, and finally to the totalitarian State. . . ."

Doderer's *magnum opus**—great in every sense of the word—was published last autumn, on his sixtieth birthday. Its less ambitious prelude, *Die Strudlhofstiege*†—a mere 909 pages long, compared to the 1,345 pages of *Die Dämonen*—has been in print since 1951. Though each is complete in itself, the two works are complementary in that some of the main characters are common to both; and chronologically, too, the action of *Die Dämonen* is a sequel to that of *Die Strudlhofstiege*. Since the author worked at the longer novel for twenty-five years, *Die Strudlhofstiege* is, in a way, the later of the two; it therefore alludes to themes and events which are treated more fully in *Die Dämonen*. A shorter and much slighter novel of Doderer's‡ is entirely devoted to one of the minor characters in *Die Strudlhofstiege*, the civil servant Zihal, who "grows human" after his retirement by developing, and finally overcoming, a mania for peeping at female neighbours from the windows of his flat—with a meticulous and compulsive thoroughness taken over from his former profession.

This comic and seemingly trivial episode in the life of one of his minor characters points to Doderer's most constant and serious preoccupation, and to one of his major distinctions as a novelist. His peculiar psychology—or demonology, to give it its correct name—is so fascinating that it would be worth studying in its own right; and Doderer has, in fact, written a separate work on the subject, due to be reprinted in the near future. The great merit of Doderer's psychology, as opposed to the various orthodoxies which he describes as "disinfected demonology," is that it embraces the whole individual in relation to his environment, not merely one mechanism called sex or self-assertion or what-have-you. It is a humanistic psychology, not a clinical one. In choosing a title for his new novel he was influenced by his wish to pay tribute to Dostoievsky; but there's more to it than that. *Die Dämonen* applies Doderer's demonology,

* *Die Dämonen. Nach der Chronik des Sektionsrates Geyrenhoff*. Munich: Biederstein Verlag. DM 38.

† *Die Strudlhofstiege oder Melzer und die Tiefe der Jahre*. DM 22.50.

‡ *Die Erleuchteten Fenster oder die Menschwerdung des Amtsrates Julius Zihal*. DM 7.50. Both Munich: Biederstein Verlag.

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which is quite different from Dostoievsky's, to a great variety of characters. None of these becomes a "case," or even a type. The demons that possess them may be quite pleasant to live with—for a time; but they create a "second reality," a cage in which some, at least, of their victim's faculties become atrophied.

Doderer's realism, therefore, is essential to his purpose; for his characters develop by breaking out of this "second reality" and liberating themselves. Yet they need no therapy other than the moment of self-discovery that may come when they least expect it, a shock treatment provided by life itself; most often by a word, an image, or a smell that unravels a whole complex of past experience. Here Proust's *madeleine* comes to mind. Doderer's sensibility is akin to Proust's and Henry James'; but his sympathies are wider, less fastidious and more robust.

The hero of *Die Strudlhofstiege*, for instance, is a soldier; a soldier uncommonly dumb—without being an ox—unread, conventionally decent, awkward, inhibited. Doderer shows the gradual awakening of Melzer's "civilian sense," which not only unties his tongue but releases him from a vicious pattern of frustrated love. Far from recoiling from such a character, Doderer's sensibility is at its finest where he retraces the pattern to an incident in Melzer's early life, his visit to Vienna on leave and his meeting, on the train that will take him back to Bosnia, with the superior officer whose friendship becomes a compensation for Melzer's failures as a civilian and as a lover. Melzer's lovesickness and the promise of a bear hunt in Bosnia fuse and conflict during the journey itself; the bear hunt, with all its associations, wins.

This becomes Melzer's "second reality," symbolised by the bear-skin rug, his trophy, which he takes back with him into civilian life after the war. *Die Dämonen* presents some thirty characters more or less securely trapped in their various "second realities." These may be sexual, political, ethical, or even linguistic, relatively harmless or utterly destructive of others or themselves. The novel is more ambitious, too, in giving an account of the whole of Austrian society at a critical period and, by implication, of the dangers that threaten this civilisation. If the book can be said to have a hero at all, he is none of the three main characters—Geyrenhoff, Stangeler, and Schlaggenberg—who embody certain phases or aspects of the author's own life. Geyrenhoff, a retired civil servant with a private income, is the principal narrator. René von Stangeler, the young historian who spent several years as a prisoner of war in Siberia, was already prominent in *Die Strudlhofstiege* and in Doderer's early novel *Das Geheimnis des Reichs* (1930). Doderer himself studied history and

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spent four years in Siberia, but he can no more be identified with Stangeler in the new novel than with Kajetan von Schlaggenberg, who resembles him in being a novelist with a brilliant and original mind. The most exemplary characters in the book may be far removed from their creator's circumstances; Prince Croix, for example, and Leonhard Kakabsa, the young working man who studies Latin and becomes librarian to Prince Croix.

Schlaggenberg's "second reality" takes the form of an obsession with corpulent ladies; he "collects" them, follows them in the street, advertises for them, compiles statistics of their weight, measurements, and other particulars—in search of the perfect, the ideal fat woman. But every ideal, like every ideology, is suspect to Doderer—not excluding Plato's Republic. Schlaggenberg, of course, does his best to pass off this mania as a joke, as a merely cerebral protest against the current fashion in women's figures; yet he is half aware of its connection with his broken marriage and his unhappiness. Another character, the wealthy businessman Herzka, is obsessed with the trial and punishment of witches. Doderer interpolates a complete "document," in 16th-century German, relating the capture, trial, and punishment of two would-be witches by one of Herzka's remote ancestors.

In other instances, the "second reality" is overtly political or ideological. Imre von Gyurkicz, a talented artist and caricaturist, is driven to political action and to his death by his inability to come to terms with his bourgeois, perhaps partly Jewish, descent, which he tries to conceal by assuming an implausible Hungarian title. Gyurkicz, too, keeps trophies of his past, but he tells lies about their provenance, even to himself. The action of *Die Dämonen* culminates in a political event, the burning down of the Vienna *Justizpalast* on July 15th, 1927. Gyurkicz is shot while inciting the crowd to violence. On the extreme Right there is the retired German cavalry officer, Baron von Eulenberg, who slides from conservatism into reaction. Geyrenhoff's nephew, Körger, has the cynicism and the ruthlessness of a younger generation that will take up the Nazi cause. On a different plane, the thief and murderer Meisgeier, who also dies horribly on July 15th, shares their hatred of the old order.

But there is no great division between the different forms of possession. A sexual fixation may crystallise into an ideology, and *vice versa*. The "second reality" of Charlotte von Schlaggenberg, Gyurkicz's mistress for a time, consists in her compulsion to become a professional violinist, though she suffers agonies in forcing herself to practise. Her conversion to reality is a sudden one. Others, like Stangeler, have to experience many little changes of direction—*tropoi*, Doderer calls them—detours and setbacks to arrive at their true selves.

THE few personages and motifs I have picked out of Doderer's novels do not amount to anything like a review. Only extensive quotations—not of sentences, paragraphs, or pages, but complete episodes—could convey any idea of his style and scope, his power to evoke every social and topographical setting by dialogue or description and—more striking still—the blending of disparate atmospheres, past and present, memory and perception. In a work that rests on the conviction that reality is not something given to us ready-made, but something each must discover for himself, no detail is insignificant: whether a man wears braces or a belt, and why, a lamp installed in a certain place, a cup of tea drunk or not drunk before a party.

Yet, for all his originality, Doderer doesn't strike one as an experimental writer. Experiment, in the arts as elsewhere, implies an element of hit or miss; but, as Stangeler says in *Die Strudlhofstiege*, "no intellectual act is wholly practicable except on an absolutely con-

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servative basis." Since Doderer doesn't keep up the Naturalist pretence of non-intervention—summed up in Flaubert's definition of the novelist as being "like God in his universe, present everywhere, visible nowhere"—it is permissible to guess that he would agree with the gist of Stangeler's remark. But Doderer's conservatism is of that generous, catholic, and liberal kind to be found in other Austrian writers, from Grillparzer to Hofmannsthal, and perhaps only in Austria. It is a principle, a way of life, and a cast of mind that has nothing to do with class or party, far less with material interests, nor with the insistence on an ideal *status ante* or *status quo*; that would be ideology. Since it aims not at exclusiveness, but at integration, it is the very opposite of snobbery. The only crushing social snub that occurs in *Die Dämonen* is administered by Prince Croix to a middle-class youth who has sneered at Leonhard's working-class origin; but the youth is the son of Mary K., whom Croix treats as his equal. What he snubs is Hubert K.'s snobbery, not his class.

Uniqueness, in most of the best writers of our time, goes with eccentricity, if not one-sidedness. It's because he is so civilised, so sane and balanced a writer that Doderer seems somehow unmodern. Balance, of course, is no virtue in itself, if there's nothing on the scales, or only mass-produced wares and standard weights. Doderer imposes order on a pandemonium. His scales are laden with such a preposterous assortment of people, forces, and events that his balance becomes positively heroic; and this applies to the composition of *Die Dämonen* as much as to its inmates. Because all his circles are concentric, and he is sure of his centre, Doderer can explore every periphery and lunatic fringe of human life, every linguistic tangent, without waywardness or eccentricity. Diplomats, doctors, factory workers, financiers (crooked and straight), policemen, prostitutes, lawyers, soldiers (commissioned or otherwise), musicians, hall porters, the proprietor and manageress of a shady café, an American lepidopterist, historians, landladies, and a whole crowd of adolescents—all these and their worlds Doderer weighs up, co-ordinates, and illuminates; and never by the merely conventional lights to which Balzac, for instance, resorted when his experience and imagination gave out.

It is regrettable, but understandable, that there will be no sequel to *Die Dämonen*; there, too, Herr von Doderer differs from Balzac, and with good reason. Without that distance of thirty years between the action of the novel and its completion, it would not have become what it is. That distance is one of its dimensions, as important as its spatial structure. *Die Dämonen* is not a topical novel or a political one, though it clarifies the most vital issues of our time, including the political. Like Proust and Joyce and Musil, Doderer is concerned with the nature of reality and experience, not with the reproduction of specific historical events. Above all, his book is a vindication of reality, and the possibility of fully inhabiting it; but in order to live in the present, one must be at peace with the past. Hence the need for those thirty years between the concept and its realisation.

Michael Hamburger

BIBLIA ANTI-BIBLIA

IN ONE of his most famous essays Lamb discusses.

books which are no books—biblia a-biblia—Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large: the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without": the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy.

"With these exceptions," he adds, "I can read almost anything."

I wonder whether, if he were alive today, Lamb would not add a second and more heinous category: *biblia anti-biblia*, the books which are against books, the volumes which not merely masquerade in the coats and colours of literature, but secretly struggle to usurp them. I have just wound my way through seven works of criticism, which partly accounts for this jaundiced observation: for, although it has become a truism to remark that certain critics are failed creators and take their revenge, conscious or not, in subtly undermining the creations of others, it is none the less also true. This is an Age of Criticism (at any rate the critics have called it that), and probably more "highbrow" criticism, bulk for bulk, peels off the presses

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every year than "highbrow" creation; and it is increasingly evident that an ever greater proportion of it—mixed up, of course, with many works of genuine critical originality and value—is fundamentally anti-literary. *Caveat lector!* I suggest that everyone formulates a set of rough-and-ready off-the-cuff rules for himself, for identifying these rogues of the herd. My own might run something like this:

(1) Does the critic assume you have read the discussed book for yourself already, or a reasonable proportion of the works of a discussed author? Mr. Graham Hough's study of Lawrence, *The Dark Sun* (Duckworth, 25s.), for instance, provides detailed précis of everything of importance that Lawrence ever wrote. Now what does Mr. Hough suppose he is up to? If we have already read the works discussed, anything beyond the merest reminder is a waste of our time, and his, and for that matter, our money, since the book is thereby so much the dearer. If not, then at worst Mr. Hough imagines that his outlines will suffice, that *The Dark Sun* can not only supplement but substitute itself for *The Rainbow*, *The Plumed Serpent*, etc.; and we have the pure *biblion anti-biblion*, roguery straight and simple. But I am certain this is not so, and therefore that Mr. Hough intends his book to be in the nature of an introduction, or of a stimulus, to the reading of Lawrence himself. Now I have not the space, nor (I dare say) the equipment, to pursue the implications of this very far. But if the reading of critical books is to be more than a (rather vapid) form of entertainment, or a tool towards passing exams or holding one's own at parties (the social eleven-plus), it must imply something in the way of improvement, instruction, life-enhancement, of education in the widest sense. And what quality of "education" is to be derived from reading discursions, no matter how brilliant, on a work of which one possesses no first-hand acquaintance? If I turn, stimulated by Mr. Hough, to a first reading of *Kangaroo*, I have to undergo a process of first rejecting the expectations aroused by Mr. Hough and of then substituting my own reactions to the naked work for them—no matter how relatively crude or impercipient, education being as it is (and as nobody need remind anybody) a drawing-out and not a putting-in. In this sense indeed my reading of *The Dark Sun* will have been not merely a matter of no progress but of so many steps backwards.

At another level, the desire to précis and paraphrase, to do (what in fact can be done for no man) the reader's reading for him, may be only the more or less venial expression of the critic's own pleasure. We meet this in basic form in the pub bore who insists on telling us the plot

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of the film he saw last night: but the urge to regurgitate the book one has just swallowed is a mere temptation and so far to be eschewed. How many works of patronising or of enthusiastic exegesis can be effectively dismissed with the formula "Another temptation not avoided"!

The appearance of "potted literature" at an otherwise high intellectual level is in fact another evidence of "the new illiteracy" brilliantly castigated in the profound and moving plea for the maintenance of cultural standards which heads Mr. R. P. Blackmur's collection of essays. *The Lion and the Honeycomb* (Methuen, 25s.), Mr. Blackmur illustrates everything that I have been saying, but by contradiction: for *The Lion and the Honeycomb* is criticism *purissimus*, in some essays ("The American Literary Expatriate, Dante's Ten Terms for the Treatment of the Treatise") the erection of a body of literary theory upon specific works with which the reader is expected to be adequately conversant, in others ("Notes on Four Categories in Criticism, Between the Numen and the Moha") that quintessence of critical method which bears to ordinary criticism the same relationship as political theory does to mere politics. This is an always masterly, occasionally maddening book, to which I shall make further reference later.

The late Wyndham Lewis (in *Snooty Baronet*, I think) once started estimating what he called the "reality-coefficients" of certain of his characters, the extent to which they were what they were by choice rather than by blind response to condition or stimulus. Figures ranged alarmingly low. Estimate the "reality-coefficients" of critical books in a similar way by reckoning the degree to which they actually contribute something of their own rather than subsist in a substitute or parasite relation to the books they derive from.

(2) LET us suppose we are holding in our hands a book whose spine is lettered, simply, JOHN MILTON/JOHN SMITH. Two horses in a trace. We know who is writing about whom: but let us make sure which horse is leader! There is an excellent sort of book which details the essential facts and fancies of a writer's life, including when and why he wrote his books, but eschews "interpretations," "value judgments," "system-making." Such a compilation provides an incomparable introduction to a writer's work, gathering as it does into a single volume essential facts and data not perhaps to be so found elsewhere: facts which moreover are left to speak for themselves (which they do so much more eloquently than paid counsel), while leaving the reader free to draw for himself from their correlation whatever conclusions he cares to.

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On the other hand, if SMITH is leading MILTON, then the essence of the book is that it should be a projection of the persona and opinions of SMITH, to whom MILTON is serving only as a springboard for this projection. This is not necessarily a Bad Thing—if our spine reads RICHARD SAVAGE/SAMUEL JOHNSON, we are glad rather than sorry to see JOHNSON lead: but the hard-headed reader should determine for himself just what the position is, and whether SMITH is claiming more for himself than a discreetly self-effacing middlemanship in MILTONIC studies.

Mr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky's *Dostoevsky* (Arco, 30s.) is a work of the first category, originally published in 1934 and now deservedly re-issued in an enlarged and completely revised version. Curiously little of value exists in English on Dostoevsky, and it is not too much to say that a proper understanding of how "the man" came to write "the books" is scarcely possible without the aid of this invaluable and indispensable companion, which I have therefore no hesitation in recommending. A somewhat comparable recent reprint is Miss Helen C. White's *The Metaphysical Poets* (Macmillan, New York and London, 35s.), first published in 1936. This book contains much less biography, and more interpretation, than the former; but where she interprets, it is more usually as an orthodox Christian (though one of a fine and understanding temper) than as a purely independent witness. Miss White is indeed concerned only with the "divine" poets of this school, and her too general main title demands the qualification which her sub-title provides—"A Study in Religious Experience." There is much here of Dr., but little or nothing of Jack, Donne; and such secular figures as Carew, Randolph, and for that matter even the largely religious, though "second generation," Marvell, are not even mentioned in passing. But within its therefore perhaps too narrow limits this is a valuable book, especially insofar as it is, religiously speaking, written from the inside.

In Professor Willem L. Graff's *Rainer Maria Rilke* (Princeton University Press; London, Oxford University Press, 48s.) on the other hand, with its sub-title "Creative Anguish of a Modern Poet," we may not unfairly say that GRAFF has taken over leading-horse from RILKE. Professor Graff is mainly concerned with "Rilke's fundamental poetic motifs and symbols and the central place the creative process occupies among them." He brings to this task "the tools of modern psychology and philosophy" *undsoweiter*, and the result is a sort of intellectual ballet by the professor round the rose-destroyed figure of the poet, until the latter finally disappears altogether. This is not a book, therefore, for the unversed in Rilke, and even the most confirmed enthusiast should approach it with trepidation lest he substitute Professor Graff's (certainly often profound, certainly often acute) vision for his own. This book indeed might also figure under my third principle, which is

(3) DETECT the systematiser. Most critics, being predominantly men rather of the deductive than of the intuitive cast, tend to prefer the neatness of a syllogism to the awkwardness of a fact. Art *ought* to "work to rule" and, by Boileau!, by the time he's finished with it, it will jolly well have got to. Systematisers deal in generalities: let the hard-headed critic of critics pause at each generality, propose a concrete example, and see how the generality measures up to it. When Mr. John McCormick, for instance, in his study of the novel, *Catastrophe and Imagination* (Longmans, 25s.), remarks,

> *The important contribution of surrealism to fiction has been its effect upon the modern novelists' conception of time, and the realization of the possibilities of that other dimension of time, space.*

—we may apply, to whatever is left after unbegging all Mr. McCormick's questions, almost any example of "surrealist" writing we happen to know in order to come to the conclusion that the only contribution of any note is that of "incongruous juxtaposition"—of notions, objects, parts of speech; not places, times. And the critic's own example of "surrealist" writing, *A la recherche du temps perdu* ("Surrealism contributed to Proust's basic spatial concept the material of dreams and the apparently illogical, temporally detached symbolic object"), will, if critically examined by "example" in any of its terms, serve to quell any lingering confidence in Mr. McCormick's own interpretation of his generality. Indeed this impolite and impercipient compilation is as full of similarly hollow dicta as it is of ill-considered strictures on writers whose little fingers are thicker than Mr. McCormick's loins. Mr. Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (Chatto and Windus, 25s.) is a pleasant contrast; this is an academic excursus through what is an already pretty well-stamped stamping-ground — the ur-novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding—but it is thorough and intelligent within its bounds and particularly valuable in its masterly placing of the birth of the novel within its social and economic context.

(4) STYLE. If the critic presumes to speak of style in others, take a hard look at his own. This may appear to be no more than a vindictive *tu quoque*, but indeed it is more;

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for literary style, like the sculptor's surface, or most of the art (as distinct from the mere enjoyment) of music, is something that can only be usefully commented on by the practitioner, from within. If the critic shows by his manner of writing that he is, so to speak, a non-writer, then there are certain aspects of the literary art from which he disbars himself as a viable critic —though there may be (I do not say that there are) other aspects about which he is perhaps better qualified than the creative writer himself to speak. Dr. Leavis appears to me in certain respects so to have disbarred himself; and so, alas, does Mr. Blackmur—which is why I referred to *The Lion and the Honeycomb* earlier as "always masterly, occasionally maddening." His tendency is always to screw up even easy meanings into hard readings, which is legitimate if sadistic: but when he permits himself to remark

> *This is to say that the imbalance between the insider and the outsider, between anarchy and order, which both men felt in their lives, was never settled, but was left, rather, always teetering on the little fulcrum of the soul's balance, always precariously perched on the branch of consciousness just beyond reach but fascinating full attention.*

—what are we to say, other than that there are certain levels at which language becomes meaningless to this writer and at which therefore he is incompetent to make pronouncements upon it?

Well, four principles are quite enough to go on with, and the sturdily independent reader may amuse himself by applying them to this current review (from the first it is excused by its nature, under the second it is most uneasy, under the third uneasy, and as to the fourth may the muse have mercy on us all!). The calamitous result may at least afford some grim satisfaction to the hard-working gentlemen I have been using as pegs to my marquee—subsisting, in fact, in a parasite relation to them, though not (I very much hope, and would urge on my own reader) in a substitutory one.

Hilary Corke

A.W.O.L.

WHAT would it be like to act as American cultural attaché (there are such appointments) in a European country? No doubt it would be uncomfortable to hold any official and institutionalised responsibility for plugging one's national culture. In this sense I for one would be embarrassed, as an Englishman, if sent to enthuse abroad for the British Council: to eschew partisan verdicts, especially in politics, and to pipe up impartially on behalf of Munnings *and* Bacon, Wheeler *and* Moore, Maugham *and* Amis. For Americans, though, there must be subtler problems—quite apart from those engendered by their affluence and our shabby resentments. How persuade the British, for example, that the American Way of Life is, in its more liberal aspects, anything more than a British patent infringed? Could you try to tell the British, as some American papers have assured their readers, that Mr. Nkrumah got all his ideas from his years of study in the United States? *What about segregation?*—comes the gleeful *tu quoque*, better in Euro-American disputes than even the name of McCarthy. And then—well, really, American *culture*? Useless to reel off names of painters and poets that Europeans have never heard of: the poor attaché might as well have invented them on the spur of the moment, as an obscure private joke. Futile to quarrel with the visiting European critic, such as Mr. Geoffrey Grigson, who a few years ago complained that American museums were too arted up, or whose main impression of the Frick was that its attendants carry revolvers. How expound an American culture that, in a word, lacks *chic*?

Or rather, lacks the right, European kind of *chic*. What is the attaché to do about the writers that Europe with its nose for scandal *has* heard of, the ones in whose case A.W.O.L. does not stand for American Way of Life but (in its more usual, and sour, military connotation) for Absent Without Official Leave, the deserters, the expatriates, the shirkers, the knockers, the ruffian pessimists—especially when they tend to win Nobel Prizes? Ernest Hemingway, for one, who lives in Cuba, not in the United States, and who has said some hard things about the homeland? Or William Faulkner, for another? He made some nice hopeful comments in his Nobel speech, but the "message" of his work seems otherwise: it is largely a tale of ferocities, loathings, crimes, and betrayals. To take a less eminent figure, there is Henry Miller, a deliberate down-and-outer in New York and Paris,

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shockingly frank and scurrilous, for whom America has been the "air-conditioned nightmare," and so on. A fourth instance is provided by Robinson Jeffers; in fact, a new book about him by Radcliffe Squires* has prompted these remarks. Jeffers is now seventy, an aquiline old poet who first caught the public's attention a generation ago with such free verse sagas of rape and incest as *Roan Stallion* and *Tamar*. Since then he has continued to live at Carmel in California, on the very edge of "this cumbered continent," and growl at the mess and clutter of humanity:

> The world sickens with change, rain becomes poison,
> The earth is a pit, it is time to perish.
> The vines are fey, the very kindness of nature
> Corrupts what her cruelty before strengthened.
> When you stand on the peak of time it is time to begin to perish.

He has pictured the earth

> dreaming of the bath of a storm that prepares up the long coast
> Of the future to scour more than her sea-lines:
> The cities gone down, the people fewer and the hawks more numerous....

He has even with a grim satisfaction contemplated a future in which there will be no people left at all, when grass and headland will

> enjoy wonderful vengeance and suck
> The arteries and walk in triumph on the faces.

What becomes of the American Way of Life in the light of such A.W.O.L. pronouncements? Lots of arguments are of course open to the intelligent attaché. He can point out that modern European literature has not been notably patriotic in the last half-century. Jeffers's English contemporary, D. H. Lawrence, whom he resembles in some respects, was hardly an advocate of the British way and purpose. Among other things Lawrence was an expatriate; and expatriation or exile (as, say, with Thomas Mann) has been a common enough fate for European writers. A number have gone to America and taken American citizenship. As for the American expatriates, most of them are home again: Henry Miller is a "Carmelite" neighbour of Jeffers. In any event, it is simple-minded to visualise a country's writers as its cheer-leaders, or to suppose that its cultural products only win friends abroad when they are winsome. A film like *The Blackboard Jungle*, which the U.S. ambassador Mrs. Luce did not want shown in Italy, was likely to have impressed more foreigners with its honesty than were alienated by its brutality. Nor are the knockers as shocking and immoral as their shallower critics have maintained. Most of Robinson Jeffers's long poems have worn badly, though there are fine patches left, but they now seem dull rather than dreadful. We are insulated against them, like the Boston lady quoted by John Jay Chapman who, asked about a Greek tragedy she had just seen performed, replied, "Oh, it's one of those plays where one character says to another, 'If you don't kill mother, I will.'" But in the Jeffers narrative pieces, and in his lyrics (as Mr. Squires ploddingly demonstrates) there are plenty of affirmative statements of a certain sort.

THE REAL and thoroughly valid answer of the attaché is one, however, that is difficult for him to formulate without denying his own function and without appearing to sell America short. It is that Jeffers, and Faulkner (and in varying degrees Hemingway, Miller, and others) are not so much anti-American as un-American. More precisely, they are not hostile to their own country in particular but, rather, suspicious of civilisation in general. Perhaps this does constitute an indirect indictment of America. Perhaps

* *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers*. By RADCLIFFE SQUIRES. University of Michigan Press and O.U.P. 34s.

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it does vitiate their work, by rendering them contemptuous of ideas, or susceptible to half-baked ideas (Jeffers played with the notion that war would be beneficial, in reaching to the dulled nerve of sensibility; in some of his earlier work he hankers vaguely after a Leader), or prone to curious ambiguities of primitive violence, private codes, and extravagant self-pity (as in some of Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren, or as in Eugene Burdick's recent novel, *The Ninth Wave*). Yet these are only the weaker sides of a tradition—attitude may be a more suitable word—that has an honourable lineage. It goes back at least as far as Emerson and Thoreau (Emerson, by the way, is one of Henry Miller's favourite authors, even if there is no obvious connection between *The American Scholar* and *Tropic of Cancer*), with their inordinately high standards and their corresponding acute dissatisfactions. Each American generation, in the Rooseveltian phrase, has had a rendezvous with destiny. Each has been disappointed; for each has witnessed a part-accomplishment in which the degree of failure has seemed more important than the considerable degree of success. From Fenimore Cooper down to Faulkner and Jeffers, they have watched the wilderness yield to settlement, hating the process while they have marvelled at it. Against the scale of prehistory, human endeavour has looked vulgar and malign; and ephemeral. The landscape itself delivers the verdict. As W. H. Auden points out, it is not only possible, it is easy for a poet like Jeffers to imagine mankind as extinct, "for he has seen with his own eyes country as yet untouched by history." At its worst, the literature of such experience is ranting, angry, and ugly. At its best, as in some of Jeffers, it has a bleak, indifferent dignity, preferring rocks, rivers, forests, and oceans to all but the rarest aspects of man's business. I find this magnificent, and draw much consolation from it in contemplating a tomorrow in which A.W.O.L. may still bear more than one meaning:

> Here from this mountain shore, headland beyond stormy headland plunging like dolphins through the grey sea-smoke
> Into pale sea, look west at the hill of water: it is half the planet: this dome, this half-globe, this bulging
> Eyeball of water, arched over to Asia,
> Australia and white Antarctica: those are the eyelids that never close; this is the staring unsleeping
> Eye of the earth, and what it watches is not our wars.

Marcus Cunliffe

SHORT STORY COMPETITION

The Editors regret that, owing to the absence abroad of two of the judges, there has been a delay in judging the entries for the short story competition for Asian and African writers. They hope that the winning entry will be published in the August issue.

CORRECTION

The Problem of Knowledge *by A. J. Ayer, which was reviewed by Morton White in our April issue, is published in a hard-cover edition by Macmillan & Co. Ltd., price 18s. as well as by Penguin in a paper back.*

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